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LORD MELBOURNE.

(After the portrait by SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE).



THE MINERVA LIBRARY OF FAMOUS BOOKS.

Edited by G. T. BETTANY, M.A., B.Sc.

M E M O I R S

OF

WILLIAM LAMB,

SECOND

VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

BY

W. M. TORRENS.

WITH A PORTRAIT AFTER SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE.

NEW EDITION, REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

With a Biographical Notice of Mr. Torrens by the Editor.

WARD, LOCK AND CO.,
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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN we consider the period over which Lord Melbourne's parliamentary life extended, his association with great politicians like Fox, Canning, Grey, Russell, Palmerston, Brougham, and many others, the important part that he played in the social life of his time, and the fact that he had the responsible office of initiating Queen Victoria into the duties of a constitutional sovereign, his biography must necessarily have great and permanent interest. Its inclusion in the Minerva Library is therefore a reasonable recognition of the claims of modern history and public life on the attention of present-day readers; and it may be claimed that even those who are fairly well acquainted with the events of the first half of this century, will gain a more vivid conception of many of them, and acquire a more personal interest in the principal actors, from its perusal.

Without departing from the restraints imposed on criticism in an introduction to a living writer's work, I may be allowed to draw attention to Mr. McCullagh Torrens' very considerable claims to public gratitude.

Soon after taking his University degree Mr. Torrens was appointed an Assistant Commissioner to inquire into the condition of the labouring poor in Ireland, whose numbers and privations had become a grave reproach to Government and peril to the State; but who, until the ministry of Lord Melbourne, had never been heard as witnesses on their own behalf, and the actual nature of whose plight was legislatively unknown. No legal provision for destitution, for sickness, orphanage, or age, as yet existed in Ireland; and the burden of supporting the helpless fell on the often unemployed, and oftener ill-waged poor. But influential absenteeism had hoped to baffle any exposure of the evil through their official staff of subordinates, who furnished only

vague and evasive statements of fact, and concurrent objections to anything effectual being done. After several months spent to no purpose, the Commissioners had begun to fear that the inquiry would fail ; when their chairman, Archbishop Whately, struck by the views expressed by Mr. Torrens and two of his friends on the subject, proposed to Lord Melbourne that they should be named Assistant Commissioners. The task was undertaken by them ; and throughout the country tenants, agents, mendicants, and magistrates were asked to tell their conflicting stories of over-bidding for land, of under-bidding for employment, and of the mischief and misery arising from both. Exhaustive reports were made ; and the bitter cry of suffering was for the first time made audible in the negligent chambers of power. The indispensable need of a Poor Law could no longer be denied, and in Ireland as well as in England property was made to feel that it had duties and liabilities, as well as rights.

The pursuit and practice of the law as a profession did not prevent Mr. Torrens from lending active aid to the work of popular education ; and in concert with the late Sir Robert Kane he founded the first Mechanics' Institute in Dublin ; contributing on its opening a course of lectures on the Use and Study of History, which formed the first of many volumes bearing his name. A work of more research and more direct application to the questions of the day was undertaken by him at the instance of Mr. Cobden to show that other communities had already found the advantage and security of Free Trade. In the "Industrial History of Free Nations" (1846), the prosperity of the ancient Greeks and the modern Dutch was shown to have grown up with their local liberties, and to have been characterised by their spirit. Mr. Torrens was a warm advocate of the abolition of the Corn Laws ; and he delighted his associates in that memorable struggle by exhuming from the dust of centuries two admirable commercial treaties whereby the Governments of Carthage and of Rome bound themselves to abate reciprocally the customs dues chargeable on one another's goods. On the formation of Lord Russell's Ministry in 1846 Mr. Torrens was named to take a confidential part in the Irish Executive, whereupon Lord Lansdowne excused himself for not congratulating him on his appointment, on the ground that he felt that his congratulations should be offered to his colleagues rather than to his friend. He soon after entered Parliament, in which he occupied a seat for more than twenty years (for Dundalk, 1847-1852 ; Finsbury, 1865-

1885). His Memoirs of the brilliant Irish orator, R. Lalor Sheil, appeared in 1855, and his Life of Sir James Graham in 1862.

The overcrowded state of many districts of London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other great centres of industry had long been the subject of reproach and remonstrance by the humane; but the difficulties that beset every attempt to remedy the evil were deemed insurmountable. Local authorities did not possess the power, and the central Executive shrank from the responsibility, of effectual interposition. In 1867 the Member for Finsbury introduced a bill for the purpose of dealing with the slums, and for re-housing the people near their work; and with difficulty obtained leave to have it referred to a select committee, where it was almost drowned by cavils and objections. But in the following session he renewed his appeal that the labouring classes should not be left to swelter and pine in dens not fit for human habitation. Opposition, at first scornful and bantering, by degrees gave way, and at the close of 1868 the royal assent was given to the well-known and valuable statute which bears his name. Further additions and amendments, suggested by experience, have since been made, and multitudes have been transferred from abodes of degradation and disease to light, airy, and healthy dwellings. When Lord Shaftesbury was asked in 1885, by the Royal Commission to inquire into the Housing of the Working Classes, what change had been wrought in the Metropolis during recent years, he said it had been so "enormous" as to be indescribable to those who could not recall the actual condition of the past.

As an independent Liberal, he has contributed materially to the improvement of many important measures. Having supported Mr. Disraeli's proposal of household suffrage for towns, he in committee carried the Lodger Franchise. In 1869 he secured the adoption of the Boarding-out system for London children under the Poor Law. In 1870 the Extradition Acts were amended in accordance with the recommendations of a committee for which he had moved in 1868, defining especially the limits to the extradition of persons who were accused of political as well as other crimes, and who might till then be demanded on one plea and punished on another. Extradition treaties with very many States have since been concluded on this basis. He suggested the formation of a School Board for all London as an amendment to Mr. Forster's Education Act, and was one of the members of the first Board. In 1885 he carried an Act making the charge for water rates in London leviable

only on the amount of the public assessment. These are but a few of the measures of his time which Mr. Torrens, though never in office, greatly influenced for good.

Meanwhile Mr. Torrens published a useful historical epitome of our acquisitions in the East, entitled "Empire in Asia; how we came by it (1872);"—A plan for the "Reform of Parliamentary Procedure (1881)," by devolving the care of legislative details on Grand Committees consisting of a fourth or a fifth of the House;—and the work which is now re-issued in a popular edition. Thus the praise of a well-spent life belongs rightfully to this distinguished Irishman.

G. T. B.

PREFACE.

SOME historic tribute, it will be owned, is due to the memory of a man who by the space of forty years took part in promoting every legislative change which subsequent experience has approved, and who in three successive reigns filled some of the most responsible offices of state. And if the recollections of his public life be found entwined with those of unbroken friendship and domestic tenderness, while not a boastful phrase, ungenerous act, or word of flattery addressed to monarch or to multitude needs extenuation or apology, they can but furnish one more proof that he who makes least claim to lofty motives is oftentimes most worthy of respect and love.

I could have wished that some one more competent had undertaken the task of chronicling the best doings and sayings of Lord Melbourne. But time wears on, personal recollections fade, and cotemporaries one by one drop into the grave. In a little while longer I felt that it probably would be too late, and that regrets would then be vain. My own acquaintance with public affairs began while he was minister, and the impression he made on me, of genial temper, broad-heartedness, civil courage, practical wisdom, and fine humour, has not been effaced by any combination of high qualities in any of those with whom he served in office or in Parliament, many of whom I have personally known. He was not an orator, a jurist, or a financier; no statute bears distinctively his name, and no volume is inscribed with it. He did not even take the trouble of writing letters for effect; and his correspondence, like his conversation, was never in full dress. But a colleague who knew him well said to me when speaking of him,—“He was a great gentleman;” high-minded without assumption, munificent without letting it be known, careful of the interests of the Crown without compromising his self-respect, faithful to party without harbouring ill-will to opponents, outspoken almost to a fault, yet never taking advantage of confidence or wilfully inflicting a wound; sensitive as a woman to misrepresentation, yet of all men the most placable and ready to forgive a wrong: a man sorely tried in the relations of private life, yet

never suffering his griefs to mar the happiness of those around him by a murmur at the pain he was doomed to endure. No wonder he had fewer enemies and more warmly attached friends than many men of his time. Such geniality, however delightful and endearing, would not, indeed, of itself perhaps justify a claim to historical remembrance. But circumstances in some degree exceptional enabled him to earn a reputation for administrative skill which has not frequently been surpassed. Unlike his predecessors in office, power came to him late in life, and when habits of luxurious leisure unfitted him, as was feared, for the performance of its onerous duties. The elasticity of his nature, and a noble ambition to vindicate the early expectations formed regarding him, enabled him to win credit and confidence as Secretary for Ireland and afterwards as Minister for the Home Department, in very difficult times. The verdict of colleagues, whose collective weal and individual ease are necessarily at stake, is often more severe than that of the public at large. Melbourne was, in fact, popular with both; and when at last he was placed at the head of affairs, he evinced a maturity of judgment and finely tempered tenacity of purpose which, in seasons of perplexity, rendered him indispensable to his party, and secured him a longer tenure of office than has been enjoyed by any Premier of our time.

From the varied correspondence to which I have had access, I have endeavoured to draw the chief materials for these Memoirs. My acknowledgments are especially due to the Duke of Wellington, Lords Russell, Lansdowne, and Beaconsfield, and Lady Monteagle, for the papers respectively placed by them at my disposal. But to a great extent I have preferred to weld together traditional and documentary materials, rather than to reproduce at length letters which in part have lost their specific interest, and in part could hardly have been written with any idea of eventual publication. Two or three subjects of a personal nature I have abstained altogether from noticing, not because their fair discussion would, in my opinion, tend to depreciate the value set upon the character of the minister or the man, but because I reject as wholly untenable the claim of idle curiosity to inquire without reserve or forbearance into the affairs of the dead, merely on the pretence that the living were illustrious. Whatever seemed to me fitted to explain or illustrate the acts or motives of the statesman I have given faithfully: about things in no way calculated to serve that purpose, I am willing to bear the burthen of having exercised a disinterested discretion,

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER

PAGE

I.—ANTECEDENTS. •

MANOR OF MELBOURNE—SECRETARY OF STATE TO CHARLES
I.—PURITANS AND CAVALIERS—VICE-CHAMBERLAIN TO QUEEN
ANNE—THE OLD PLEADER OF LINCOLN'S INN—SIR MATTHEW
LAMB—FIRST LORD MELBOURNE—BROCKET HALL. 1

II.—EARLY SURROUNDINGS.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD—PRINCE OF WALES'S HOUSEHOLD—
GUESTS AND INTIMATES—CLASS-FELLOWS AT ETON—MRS.
DAMER—LORD EGREMONT—EXCHANGE OF MANSIONS—PRIZE
DECLAMATION AT CAMBRIDGE—A WINTER AT GLASGOW . . . 15

III.—A YOUNGER SON.

FIRING AT THE KING—BROCKET RACES—A PLAY OF DOUBT-
FUL AUTHORSHIP—BEAU BRUMMEL—CALL TO THE BAR—
LADY CAROLINE PONSONBY—DEATH OF ELDER BROTHER . . . 27

IV.—IN THE COMMONS.

COTEMPORARIES IN PARLIAMENT—HUSKISSON—ALL THE
TALENTS—THE CATHOLIC QUESTION—MAIDEN SPEECH—
PLUNKET—FALL OF GRENVILLE—SECOND VOTE OF CENSURE
—DISCOURAGED AS A DEBATER—BIRTH OF ONLY SON—COPEN-
HAGEN 38

V.—VOTES IN OPPOSITION.

CHARGES AGAINST THE DUKE OF YORK—ABOLITION OF SINE-
CURES—REFORM OF THE CRIMINAL LAW—RESTRICTIONS ON
THE REGENCY—A LORD OF THE BEDCHAMBER—SUPPORT OF
THE WAR—DEATH OF PERCEVAL 50

VI.—OUT OF PARLIAMENT.

BOOKS AND OPINIONS—MELBOURNE HOUSE—BYRON—DOMES-
TIC JARS—'GLENARVON' 61

VII.—RE-ENTERS PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH ON REDUCTION OF OFFICES—RETURNED FOR PETER-
BOROUGH—SPEECH ON THE ADDRESS—SECRET COMMITTEE—
DEATH OF LADY MELBOURNE—GEORGE LAMB M.P. FOR
WESTMINSTER—MEMOIRS OF SHERIDAN 76

VIII.—KNIGHT OF THE SHIRE.

M.P. FOR HERTFORDSHIRE — REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION—
SECOND CONTEST FOR WESTMINSTER—DEATH OF GEORGE

III.—PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE QUEEN 92

IX.—BEGINNING OF THE END.

GEORGE IV. AND THE WHIGS—PLUNKET'S PLEA FOR RE-
LIGIOUS LIBERTY — LAMBTON'S MOTION FOR REFORM—
CATHOLIC PEERS BILL—DEATH OF CASTLEREAGH—CANNING
LEADER AT LAST—ADVICE TO WARD—LITERARY FRIENDS

105

X.—LADY CAROLINE AND HER SON.

DOMESTIC LIFE—AUGUSTUS LAMB—LETTERS TO GODWIN—
HUSKISSON—REPLY TO MACKINTOSH—REFUSAL OF OFFICE
—DEATH AND FUNERAL OF BYRON—ALIENATION

113

XI.—PROGRESS AND REACTION.

THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION—REPRESSION AND CONCESSION
—FAILURE OF PROPOSED COMPROMISE—GIVING UP THE
COUNTY—CONTEST FOR HERTFORD

127

XII.—CANNING'S ADMINISTRATION.

RISE OF COPLEY—COALITION—TREATMENT OF PLUNKET—
DISSENSERS' MARRIAGE BILL—A CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE
—DEATH OF CANNING—GODERICH AND LANSDOWNE

140

XIII.—DUBLIN CASTLE.

DUBLIN CORPORATION — ASSISTANT BARRISTERS — POLICE
FORCE—SUBSIDISING THE PRESS—JOBGING—POST OFFICE
ABUSES—AGRARIAN COMBINATIONS

154

XIV.—THE IRISH CHANCELLORSHIP.

PLUNKET—SIR ANTHONY HART—CATHOLIC MAGISTRATES—
SCHOOLS AND ASYLUMS — O'CONNELL'S POSITION — PER-
PLEXITIES OF PATRONAGE — AGRARIANISM — RETIREMENT
OF LORD WELLESLEY

170

XV.—THE WELLINGTON ADMINISTRATION.

ILLNESS AND DEATH OF LADY CAROLINE — RESIGNATION
OF GODERICH — COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SENT FOR — ELDON
LEFT OUT—HUSKISSON AND HIS FRIENDS REMAIN—EASTERN
QUESTION.

190

XVI.—IN THE LORDS.

FIFTY YEARS GONE BY—CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION—WILLIAM
IV.—SEAT IN CABINET DECLINED—CHANGE OF GOVERN-
MENT.

203

XVII.—HOME SECRETARY.

THE GREY ADMINISTRATION—HOME OFFICE—THE DUKE
IN HAMPSHIRE—ANGLESEY AND STANLEY—STATE OF IRE-
LAND—FIRST REFORM BILL. 221

XVIII.—THE REFORM BILL.

TEN-POUND FRANCHISE—SCHEDULE A—MAJORITY IN THE
COMMONS—BILL REJECTED BY THE LORDS—GENERAL
PERTURBATION. 235

XIX.—PARLIAMENT REFORMED.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH BISHOP DOYLE—POWER TO MAKE
PEERS — PROJECTS OF COMPROMISE—SECOND READING
CARRIED—DEFEAT IN COMMITTEE—DISTURBED CONDI-
TION OF IRELAND—COMMANDERSHIP OF THE ARMY. . . 252

XX.—EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE DUTIES.

COERCION BILL—FIRST FACTORY ACT—MRS. NORTON—
HOME OFFICE PATRONAGE—MR. DISRAELI—VICEROYALTY
OF IRELAND—CHURCH TEMPORALITIES 269

XXI.—FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

SECESSION OF STANLEY AND GRAHAM — MITIGATED
COERCION BILL—RESIGNATION OF EARL GREY—DESIGNS
OF COALITION—MELBOURNE PREMIER—POLICY OF CON-
CILIATION 286

XXII.—DISMISSAL OF THE WHIGS.

ALTHORP BECOMES A PEER—INTERVIEW WITH THE KING
—CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT—CONDUCT OF BROUGHAM—
PEEL SUMMONED FROM ROME—SPEECH AT MELBOURNE
—ADDRESS FROM DERBY 305

XXIII.—CHIEF OF OPPOSITION.

PARLIAMENT OF 1835—CONTEST FOR THE SPEAKERSHIP
—CONFIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE—PERSONAL CHARAC-
TERISTICS—THE PEEL ADMINISTRATION OVERTHROWN . . 329

XXIV.—FORMING A GOVERNMENT.

REFUSAL TO ATTEMPT COALITION—BROUGHAM AND
O'CONNELL LEFT OUT—JEALOUSY OF PALMERSTON—IRISH
LAW OFFICERS—THOMAS DRUMMOND 351

XXV.—DIFFICULTIES WITH THE KING AND THE PEERS.

GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP OF INDIA—SPEECH ON IRISH
CHURCH—DISCONTENT OF WILLIAM IV.—POLICY OF
RUSSIA—MUNICIPAL REFORM — LETTER FROM LORD
ASHBURTON 370

CHAPTER

PAGE

XXVI.—ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES.

PEPYS MADE CHANCELLOR—RESENTMENT OF BROUGHAM
—SUPPORTERS IN THE PEERS—BISHOP LONGLEY—DR.
ARNOLD—NORTON v. MELBOURNE—REPLY TO LYNTHURST 392

XXVII.—LATTER DAYS OF WILLIAM IV.

IRISH APPOINTMENTS—GUESTS AT THE PALACE—FINAN-
CIAL CRISIS—DEATH OF AUGUSTUS LAMB—DISSATIS-
FACTION OF THE SPEAKER—CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE
BISHOP OF RIPON. 416

XXVIII.—QUEEN VICTORIA.

ACCESSION OF THE QUEEN—THE HOUSEHOLD—GENERAL
ELECTION—CIVIL LIST—ATTACKS OF BROUGHAM—
CORONATION. 437

XXIX.—POWER AT LAST.

MACAULAY'S RETURN FROM INDIA—AFFAIRS OF PERSIA
AND AFGHANISTAN—RUSSIA'S DESIGNS ON INDIA—
DURHAM IN CANADA—MILITARY PATRONAGE—VISCOUNT
EBRINGTON 456

XXX.—THE RESTORED CABINET.

FORMATION OF RAILWAYS IN IRELAND—THE SPEAKER-
SHIP—RESIGNATION OF MINISTERS—LADIES OF THE
BEDCHAMBER—MINISTERS RESUME OFFICE—POSTAL
REFORM. 474

XXXI.—MARRIAGE OF THE QUEEN.

QUESTIONS OF PRECEDENCY—CLARENDON AND MACAULAY
—DEATH OF DRUMMOND—LORD STANLEY'S REGISTRATION
BILL—SYRIAN QUESTION—THIRLWALL A' BISHOP . . . 491

XXXII.—FALL OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

DEBATE ON EASTERN QUESTION—DUTIES OF PRINCE
ALBERT—REMOVAL OF PLUNKET—FIXED DUTY ON CORN
—DEFEAT ON THE SUGAR DUTIES—RESULTS OF THE
GENERAL ELECTION—RESIGNATION OF MINISTERS. . . 515

XXXIII.—CLOSING YEARS.

DISENCHANTMENT AND DEPRESSION—ILL-HEALTH—ANTI-
CORN LAW LEAGUE—RENEWED AGITATION IN IRELAND
—DISINTEGRATION OF PEELISM—FRIENDS IN POWER
WITHOUT HIM—ILLNESS AND DEATH 529

MEMOIRS

OF

VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

CHAPTER I.

ANTECEDENTS.

Manor of Melbourne—Secretary of State to Charles I.—Puritans and Cavaliers—Vice-Chamberlain to Queen Anne—The old Pleader of Lincoln's Inn—Sir Matthew Lamb—First Lord Melbourne—Brock Hall.

IN one of the pleasant valleys of south Derbyshire, not far from Ashby-de-la-Zouch, stands the ancient church and modern town of Melbourne. The manor was in Norman times part of the demesne of the Crown. Granted successively to more than one favourite of the hour, and resumed on some real or imaginary pretext of forfeiture, it was given by Edward III. to his brother, and it long remained among the great possessions of the house of Lancaster. In Tudor days a castle on the north bank of the stream, "metely kept in repair,"¹ was held for the king : the neighbouring hamlet thriving apace, by dint of certain handicrafts, into a busy market town. The severed fiefs of York and Lancaster, once more re-united in the heritage of royalty, were by degrees distributed again in recompense for service done ; and Melbourne Manor was in 1604 conferred by James I. on Charles, Earl of Nottingham, from whom soon afterwards it passed to the family of Huntingdon, and subsequently to that of Hastings. A survey at the close of Elizabeth's reign noted "a faire ancient castle, which Her Majesty keepeth in her own hands ;"² and, from a drawing attached to the survey, there is an engraving in the "Monumenta Vetusta,"³ from which the outworks seem to have been of considerable extent.

¹ Leland, 1530.

² Lyson.

³ Published by the Society of Antiquaries.

Camden somewhat later speaks of the structure as going to decay, and by the end of the century it had nearly disappeared.

By a curious whim of mediæval patronage, an interest in the weal of Melbourne had likewise been given to one of the spiritual peers. King John conferred the church and parsonage-manor on Walter Malclerc, Bishop of Carlisle, and suffered him to annex both permanently to that see. In 1229 he obtained a grant of a fair on the Nativity of the Virgin to be holden within the precincts of the episcopal manor during five days. His successors found Melbourne a pleasant resting-place on their way to the North, and sometimes went no farther. On the plea of Border troubles, Bishop Kirkby tarried longer than usual, and finally made up his mind to hold his ordination there. As the realm became more tranquil and journeying grew less hazardous, the diocesan fixed his country seat in Cumberland, and without the transitory title of "palace," the not undesirable mansion was let on lease to Sir John Coke, in possession of whose descendants Melbourne Hall has ever since remained.

The worthy man was the second son of Richard Coke of Trusley, who had been bred to the law, but quitted that profession on his marriage with the heiress of Thomas Sacheverell in the neighbouring county of Nottingham. His eldest son Francis, who married the daughter of Lord Holles, inherited the maternal lands of Kirkby, attained the dignity of knighthood, and sat in one of the brief parliaments during Elizabeth's reign. A younger brother, George, took orders, and late in life became Bishop of Hereford; while his sister's husband, Valentine Carey, was raised to the see of Exeter. John, being of a studious turn and diligent in all his ways, rose late in life to an eminent position. Sent early to Cambridge, he became a fellow of Trinity in 1584, and subsequently Professor of Rhetoric. Until his prime was passed he tarried at the University, then travelled abroad, and was nearly fifty years of age when he resolved to settle down in Derbyshire and lead the life of his progenitors, in hospitality and charity, hunting and falconry, of which last he seems to have been very fond.

His academic friends had not forgotten him, and to the first Parliament of Charles I. he was sent as member for the University. There he made divers speeches of the practical and prudent sort; the times being still but half awake, and the light that was in him, though steady and useful, shining only through narrow horn-lantern pane. Fuller¹ quaintly praises him for being governed by good maxims:—"That no man should let what is ungrateful or dangerous appear under his hand to give envy a steady aim at his place or person, nor mingle intimate with great men made desperate by debts or court injuries whose fall have been ruinous to their wisest followers; nor pry any further into secrecy then rather to secure than shew himself in no point to a friend which might empower him to become an enemy."

¹ 'Fuller and Lloyd Worthies.'

Through the influence of his kinsman, Lord Brooke, he was made Secretary of the Navy, a post of very subordinate importance in those days, but in which he was so commended as to obtain a more profitable place as Master of Bequests. In the third Parliament of the reign he was again returned for Cambridge, and, upon the death of Sir Albertus Morton, was made Secretary of State. While things went well he was a good official, faithful and frugal, deprecating change and war, and the dissipation of his master's substance in vain shows. But when the clouds began to lower, and religious feuds to warp the minds of men, he was hardly equal to the tasks which unforeseen devolved upon him. The protracted effort to impose the Liturgy on Scotland by haughty edicts, polemical diplomacy, and at length by force of arms, failed, as the Scots averred, because they were stout of heart, and, as the king's advisers told him, because his officers had no stomach for the war beyond the Tweed. But Charles felt he had incurred a heavy loss of credit both abroad and at home. His melancholy looks were a mute reproach to all in his employment. Secretary Coke was stricken in years, the best of whose ability was spent, and whom none of the powerful or ambitious courtiers regarded.

"He was a man of gravity"—says Clarendon—"who never had quickness from his cradle; who loved the Church well enough as it was twenty years before; and understood nothing that had been done in Scotland, and thought nothing that could be done there was worth such a journey as the king had put himself to. Every man shifting the fault from himself, and finding some friend to excuse him, it fell to Secretary Coke's turn (for whom nobody cared) to be made the sacrifice; and upon the pretence that he had omitted the writing which he ought to have done, and inserted some, which he ought not to have done, he was put out of his office by the dark contrivance of the Marquis of Hamilton, and the open and visible power of the Queen."

The historian adds that Strafford, seeing its injustice, strove to prevent his removal, and succeeded in having it suspended for a time, but her Majesty and the courtiers were too strong for him, and the upright man was dismissed to make room for the elder Vane.

Announcing the event to his eldest son, he wrote :—

"You have heard me declare my desire, and endeavour to obtain in this evening of my age some time of repose at home, wherein nothing did retard my resolution more than the persuasion of my friends, that I must not abandon the public whilst my being upon the stage might either advance for good, or at least give interruption to the prevailing of evil, wherein though I know not how little I could prevail in either yet my tenderness was such that I durst not break out till God should make my way. And now since the world is satisfied that it is not my own act, I both contentedly and cheerfully submit myself to God's will, and the King's. What sense good men have of it you shall hear of much by others. For me, assure yourself I shall come home unto

you with as much quiet, and with as calm a mind, and with as little repining and complaining or spleen against any one, as any ever went from court to a country life after so long and so many employments."

Laying aside all that might remind him of the days he had passed at Court, he proposed to live with his son at Melbourne, and calculated closely what establishment would suffice for both: "a bailiff, a clerk, a butler, a cook, a falconer, a groom, a footman, and a young fellow to bake and brew and keep the tercel's."

Sir John the younger sat in the Long Parliament, following the counsels of Pym and Manchester, but much disquieted by the subversive notions that eventually prevailed. He was named one of Strafford's judges, and assisted throughout the trial, but at the end did not vote, accounting for his absence to his father by some misapprehension as to the hour fixed for the decision. On the outbreak of the civil war the old man was driven, by fear of the quartering in his house of some of the new levies, to seek shelter with Danvers, his son-in-law, at Southlam in Leicestershire, having written in vain to Essex for protection from the troops under his command. He assured the general "that his heart was faithful, and his prayers assiduous for the prosperity of the Parliament wherein consisteth the welfare of the Church and State."¹ But like many of the gentry and professional classes, the family was viewed with distrust by strong partisans on both sides, as waverers and undecided; because, like Falkland, they wanted peace, and the triumph neither of the Puritans nor of the Crown.

Sir John writes to his father in the second year of the civil war:—"I pray God to continue you in good health and preserve you in safety through the troubles of the times. I hope my letter came safe to hand through the unsafety of the way."

In another, the 16th of January, he is exceedingly grieved that his father, through the misery of the times, should be enforced to remove from his house at Melbourne at this season of the year.

His letters are without signature, and bear the marks of hard usage on the road. From Leicestershire the octogenarian with difficulty made his way to the neighbourhood of Tottenham, where the brother of his second wife, Alderman Lee, resided, and where in September, 1644, he closed his eyes.

Among the townsfolk at Melbourne, the greater part were for the King, and they set about repairing some of the outworks of the castle, said to have covered two-and-twenty acres in Plantagenet times; but long since fallen into decay. Sir John Gell ordered a detachment from Derby to occupy the town, and levelled the remains of the crumbling fortress to the ground. The commanding officer, Major Swallow, found the manor excellent quarters, and established himself there for some time. Baxter, the well-known preacher, mentions that while on a visit to his friend at Sir John Coke's house, he was taken

¹ September 20th, 1642.

ill, and by the doctors sentenced to die, whereupon, thinking he had done with this troubled world, he began the work upon "Everlasting Rest," which he survived to publish, and by which his name is still widely kept in remembrance. Yet Sir John the younger was named with Lords Pembroke, Derby, and Montague, Sir Walter Earle and others of the Commons, as commissioners to receive the captive King from the Scottish army; and by them he was conducted to Holdenby in Northamptonshire. Charles distinguished General Brown, Sir J. Holland, and Sir J. Coke from the rest for the consideration shown him in the performance of their unwelcome office; telling them at the same time "it was one which unbecame gentlemen of a free mind." Like others of the moderate party, Coke hoped until the last that the great struggle might end in general amnesty and accommodation of differences. But when he saw the Monarchy overthrown, he went into voluntary exile, and died at Paris in the following year.

His brother George was among the bishops who protested against the enactments made during their enforced absence. The revenues of his see were in consequence estreated, his palace occupied by Colonel Birch, and his private estate appropriated by that worthy until the Restoration, which the deprived prelate did not live to see. His nephew, Colonel Coke, who inherited the family estate, was more fortunate. A pleasant gentleman, and well-favoured, he won the hand of the heiress of the Leventhorses in Hertfordshire, and being popular with his neighbours, he was returned for Derby to the complaisant House of Commons of 1685. His father had been expelled the Long Parliament for his steadfastness in the royal cause, and he had been bred in like principles; but when James II. spurned the remonstrance of the Commons, and instead of militia, told them he meant to employ a standing army, the House was daunted and dumb. At last Colonel Coke rose and said: "I hope we are all Englishmen, and not to be frightened by a few hard words": but they sent him to the Tower for his temerity. In 1688 he raised a troop of horse with Lord Devonshire, and obtained the rank of colonel, and while travelling abroad died in 1692 at Geneva.

Thomas Coke inherited from his father, soon after the Revolution, the family estate. Without the ability requisite for great affairs, his winning manners and good looks early made him popular in his county, for which he was returned, soon after he came of age, with Lord Hartington: he subsequently sat with Mr. Curzon, in three successive Parliaments of Anne. Though his name is not mentioned in debate, and neither Steele or Prior thought him worthy of an epigram, he seems to have been considered an influential man. Lord Chesterfield, who had been brought up with the Prince of Orange, and after his coming into England, had no little weight with government, gave the rising Commoner his daughter in marriage. The Earl complains to her of the conduct of her brother Wootton, and says he would go out of the world with satisfaction if he had a son like her husband. Even after her death in 1703, Chesterfield continued to be solicitous for his

advancement. He is spoken of, indeed, as one of those who stood well with the politicians of both parties, for in 1706 he was made by Godolphin a Privy Councillor and Vice-Chamberlain to the Queen, an office he continued to hold under Harley and St. John. In 1709 he married the beautiful Mary Hale, one of the maids of honour whom Swift mentions as "the toast" of the day. When Mr. Coke "did him the honour to ask him to dinner" she happened to be from home, being engaged to her friend Lady Sunderland, whose mother—the difficult duchess—described her as "a very pretty young woman, and of very good family." She was the daughter of Richard Hale of Codicote, in Herts, whose grandfather sat for the county in the Parliament of the Restoration; and whose brother Sir Bernard Hale, an advocate of note, was made Chief Baron of the Irish Exchequer in 1722. He subsequently became a puisne Baron at Westminster, and died in 1729 at his house in Red Lion Square.

In times when faction rent society in twain, and change of administration not unfrequently involved impeachment of chiefs and the sweeping dismissal of subordinates, it needed more than ordinary repute and tact to keep a position envied or influential. In what the skill of Coke consisted, or where his influence lay, it is not very easy to determine.

He seems to have been a genial, tolerant, and generous man, who had many friends and few enemies. With Gay and Bolingbroke he lived on terms of intimacy, while Pope, who spared nobody, quizzed his fine person and showy office under the epithet of "Sir Plume." In the "Rape of the Lock" the deputy lord of the ceremonies is sent by the angry fair one to demand the surrender of the ravished tress.

Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane,
With earnest eyes and round unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box opened, then the case.

A maiden sister resided at Melbourne, took care of his children there when young, and kept together his interest in the county by judicious management, whereof her loving letters advertised him circumstantially from time to time. All her skill and assiduity, however, in the practice of good neighbourhood failed to baffle the ambition of Sir Godfrey Clarke, who in 1710 resolved to contest the county. If the Vice-Chamberlain would have come down in time, she was sure his presence would have saved the seat; but, too indolent or too secure, he came not till too late; and his adversary won. The chroniclers of the period are content with noting that he retained his place at Court in the succeeding reign under Townshend, Stanhope, and Walpole. He was appointed likewise to a Tellership of the Exchequer, a lucrative office which he held until his death in 1727, as well as his place in the household. Nor were these the whole of his acquisitions. In the will of the political pluralist is the recital of

a grant in reversion by George I. of the Surveyor-Generalship of Customs, worth besides fees £500 a year, to him for his own life, that of his son, and that of his son-in-law, John Fanshaw. This, with the family inheritance and the manor of Melton Mowbray, the marriage portion of his second wife, was entailed on their only surviving son, with remainder to their only daughter Charlotte, to whom, as well as to her half-sisters, suitable fortunes were already secured.

His eldest daughter by Lady Mary Stanhope espoused Lord Southwell; his second had been early asked in marriage by Mr. Thornhill, but on a question regarding settlements the engagement was broken off. Some years later the proposal was renewed; and the lady, who blamed others for the previous misunderstanding, announced that this time she would not leave the business to Mr. Lamb. The legal adviser whose circumspection the lady contemned was a practitioner of long standing at Southwell in the adjoining county; who as little as herself then dreamed that in his posterity the lands and honours of the Cokes were destined to descend. He died in February, 1735, dividing his property between his two sons Robert and Matthew.

Left parentless in childhood, the care of George Coke and his sister devolved upon the family of their mother, who continued to reside in Hertfordshire. Besides his landed inheritance, the accumulations of his minority lay at the disposal of the young squire. For a time he lived at Melbourne and afterwards in London, but his passion seems to have been for foreign travel, in which he spent several years. In 1740 the hand of Charlotte was given to Matthew Lamb, whose father has been already named, and whose uncle had bequeathed him a considerable fortune.

The name of Peniston Lamb is entered, the 7th of October, 1708, as that of a student in the books of Lincoln's Inn. The term of legal probation was then seven years, and it was not, therefore, until the opening of the following reign that he was admitted to practise at the bar. Early bent on mastering the occult science of real property law and the intricacies of equity drafting, he had long been qualified to earn a considerable income by what was called pleading under the bar, and to give advice which his clients found to be safe and wise. He lived unmarried all his days; while his younger brother took to wife a lady of whose charms and virtues little is known, but who bore several children, of whom a daughter and two sons were destined to migrate westward, and to have their names identified with those of folk of quality. Peniston went on pleading and demurring, weaving settlements and ravelling threads of adverse wile from month to month and year to year, till, looking upon parchment, he had ceased to view and had half forgotten that there was any shire in the realm but that in which he laid the venue of his life. Still, as his balance rose at Child's, he dreamed occasionally pleasant dreams of estates thereafter to be settled strictly in tail male on his own or his brother's progeny; and when his hair grew grey, he gave up dilatorily rather

than deliberately the former alternative, and vouchsafed hints, every year more plain, that if his nephews showed capacity to raise their family in the world as much as he had done, he might—, but further this deponent said not. His brother at Southwell heard whispers of these things and pondered them in his heart. Robert, his eldest born, took to Latin, and was fond of choral service. Here was fitness for the Church; he had the best of schooling, went to Cambridge, and in due time took holy orders. He too, like Uncle Peniston, seems to have been proof against the witchery of the sex, a point of resemblance which, however it may have touched the equity draftsman's heart, did not prevent him from providing by special covenants that if the said Reverend Robert should marry, the lands to be purchased by the executors should be settled strictly upon his issue, or in default thereof upon Matthew and his heirs male lawfully begotten. This condition proved to be the golden hinge on which eventually the gate of splendour opened to the family.

Peniston Lamb died in 1734, and was buried in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn. His brother did not long survive him, leaving his acquisitions in Nottinghamshire to his children.

Robert rose by gradual steps of preferment until, 1744, he became Dean of Peterborough. He lived a devout and charitable life, ripening mutely for the bishopric to come. Matthew followed his uncle's calling, and mastered the difficulties of legal lore while he was still comparatively young. Through the introduction of his kinsman he became known as a useful energetic man, who had a taste for the improvement of land and an instinctive faculty for developing its resources.

For many years he is understood to have acted as confidential adviser to Lords Salisbury and Egmont in matters relating to their estates in Hertfordshire; and being ever careful to turn opportunities to account, he profited largely by the knowledge thus gained of men and circumstances. His legal acumen and business capacity gave to his opinion no inconsiderable weight as adviser and referee; and it was probably on a well-founded estimate of his practical fitness for the post that he was selected to be standing counsel to the Board of Trade. To the competency bequeathed by his uncle he steadily added gains arising from his own exertions; and in 1741 he thought he could afford himself the luxury of a seat in Parliament, and agreed accordingly for one that stood waiting to be hired at Stockbridge. It was the way of the world at the time—for lawyers, soldiers, men of letters, and younger sons, the only way of getting without uproar or ruinous expense to Palace Yard. A son was born in January, 1745, to whom the name of Peniston was given, and subsequently two daughters, Charlotte and Anne, of whom the latter died in childhood.

In 1746 Matthew Lamb purchased Brocket from the representatives of Sir Thomas Winnington. Several farms, originally forming portions of the estate, had been alienated from time to time by its prodigal owners. All of these were gradually bought back by the new possessors

But the old Hall was suffered to remain as it had been left by the family, long extinct, whose name it bore; and the indolent stream of the Lee widened and narrowed at will as it wended its way through the park, its rich banks overgrown with sedge and reeds, furnishing the best cover for snipe in all the country round.

Not long afterwards the unlooked-for tidings came that his brother-in-law had died suddenly at Geneva, leaving the whole of his goodly inheritance to his sister and her son. Mr. Lamb, though he seldom spoke in Parliament, being indeed little of a party man, had sufficient influence to obtain in 1755 the honour of a baronetcy. Thenceforth he sat for Peterborough.

The cathedral city had neither mayor nor corporation. The suffrage was by scot and lot, Lord Fitzwilliam exercising the same degree of influence as in the case of his burgage tenures at Malton, or his corporators at Higham Ferrers.¹ The steward or the bailiff of the Chapter officiated as returning officer. At rare intervals, attempts were made by lavish outlay to beguile the electors into forgetting that they were merely nominal. In this way, Mr. St. John was returned in 1699; but the election was set aside the following year on petition. After that the placid course of nomination ran so smooth that for two or three decades no trace is to be found of any contention on the subject; "Scot and Lot" periodically did the drinking and the shouting: that was all.

Sir Matthew's residence in town had hitherto been in Red Lion Square, then inhabited by judges and king's counsel. But opulence was already moving westward; and accordingly in 1756 he bought a house in Sackville Street, Piccadilly, where he dwelt for the residue of his days. Beyond his advisorship to the Board of Trade, his baronetcy, and a secure seat in Parliament for life, his ambition did not soar. The cup of his content was full; yet fortune would have it overflow. His brother became bishop of the diocese where he had so long been dean, and his daughter wedded Lord Belasyse, heir of the house of Fauconberg. If his son gave little promise of learning or of wit, and preferred Melbourne woods to Cambridge Halls, his father was consoled by his comely features, gentle manners, and docile disposition.

Sir Matthew died, after a short illness, in his sixty-fourth year, bequeathing Peniston realty and personalty estimated at nearly half a million sterling. To these were added, not long afterwards, the savings of the frugal bishop, who survived his brother only till the following year. Lord Belasyse was returned in the room of his father-in-law.

Young Sir Peniston and Lord Garlies were named to George Selwyn, the proprietor of Luggershall, as eligible candidates; and, though hardly acquainted with either, he agreed to return them both for his borough as supporters of Lord North's administration.² An

¹ Oldfield, 'Representative History,' vol. iv. p. 287.

² G. Selwyn to Lord Carlisle, Jan., 1768.

intimation was subsequently made to Selwyn, that, if he wished, Wigton might in lieu be placed at his service ; but he thought he could take care of himself, and he did so, without incurring the obligation.

Sir Peniston continued to represent for many years the hamlet in Wiltshire, which had returned two members from the days of Edward I. The qualification in the lapse of time had become so doubtful of definition as more than once to puzzle committees. There were, now and then, contests for one or both the seats between candidates without scruple as to expenditure. But before the close of the century an arrangement was come to between the two principal proprietors in the neighbourhood, which secured to their respective nominees in several Parliaments the unpurchased privilege of legislators ; and to the voteless village the uncoveted blessings of electoral peace.¹ The members who ironically bore its name at St. Stephen's were never heard in debate, and were not often told in division. In the meagre records of the period it is difficult indeed to trace their existence ; and in private memorials no mention is made of their attendance save on remarkable occasions.

Without any of the talents which those who went before him had turned to account, the young baronet found himself at three-and-twenty a person of no small consideration. Women persuaded him that he was handsome ; politicians only wanted to know what were his views ; in the county it was hoped he would reside constantly, and complete the improvements at Brocket his father had begun. Society opened its arms to so eligible a recruit, and before six months he was the suitor, slave, and betrothed of one of the fairest women of her time. Elizabeth, only daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, of Halnaby in Yorkshire, was then in her twentieth year ; and if the portraiture and gossip of the day are to be believed, possessed already the fascinations which eventually gave her an influence so considerable in the world. Her first picture, painted by Sir Joshua in 1770, was more than once engraved.² It has the fault so frequently complained of in his delineation of court beauties, that of betraying too much desire for effect. But with the freshness of youth there is mingled the unmistakable look of that ambition with which throughout life this singular woman was animated. Early in May her son Peniston was born, and with the felicitations on the glad event were mingled those upon her husband being created Lord Melbourne of Kilmore in the county of Cavan. An Irish peerage was one of the honours George III. was most ready to confer ; and, as it was not incompatible with membership of the House of Commons, it constituted an intervening grade of social rank, which, as the experience of his father's reign had shown, led the holder frequently to look for imperial ennoblement.

The world did its best to spoil the youthful favourite of fortune. While the joy of motherhood was new, Lady Melbourne was devoted

¹ Oldfield, vol. v. p. 213.

² The mezzotint by Finlayson was published the following year.

to her first-born, and delighted with his praise. Reynolds persuaded her to be painted in the attitude of fondling her child ; and in simple garb made her the subject of the charming picture engraved by Watson, well known under the name of "Maternal Affection."

Ere the winter season came again, she was ready to take part once more in the gaieties of the town. With the Duchess of Richmond and Mrs. Damer, one of the most gifted and accomplished women of her time, and with ever-multiplying troops of friends, she was content to float on the stream of fashionable life. Masquerades were then in vogue, and women of quality did not hesitate to adopt attire, at balls where dress in character was the rule, which would not be thought of in our day. Her name is mentioned with that of the Duchess of Ancaster and Lady Fordyce as "among the pretty fellows appearing in dominoes as many of the maccaroni things we see everywhere."¹

In the following spring she persuaded her husband to purchase a mansion in Piccadilly next to Burlington House, which had been built for Lord Holland from designs by Chambers, the architect of Somerset House.

Upon the site three separate dwellings originally stood, one of which did not content the ambition of Charles Spencer, second Lord Sunderland, who bought up the other two, and added a library for the notable collection of books and manuscripts subsequently transferred to Blenheim. "It was noticed," says Swift, "that he had much fallen from the heights of those republican principles with which he began" as member for Tiverton, when he would not let himself be called my Lord, and hoped to see the day when there would not be a peer in England. Here he lived with exceeding pomp, quarrelling with his imperious mother-in-law, Duchess Sarah, circumventing his colleagues, patronising Addison, and elaborating schemes for limiting the peerage : and here he prematurely ceased from troubling, after which Sunderland House became the possession of another and not less remarkable Secretary of State.

The family of Fox, like that of Coke, owed its uprise to the favour of the Stuarts. Old Sir Stephen stood upon the scaffold at Whitehall ; and steadily refused to conform to the will of Cromwell. Under the Restoration he was recompensed for loss and exile by more than one lucrative post ; and when at his instance Chelsea Hospital was founded, he backed his advice with a donation of thirteen thousand pounds. His eldest son held office under Walpole, and became Lord Ilchester. The younger Henry squandered his inheritance at play ; then took to politics with a view of retrieving his position ; soon made his mark as a debater of pith and versatility ; was made Surveyor of Works by Walpole, and Lord of the Treasury by Carteret. Then he asked Lady Caroline Lennox in marriage ; and when repelled by her sire, stole her by the help of the Duke of Marlborough, who gave her away.

¹ Reynolds' Diary.

Holland House, at Kensington, deserted and in disrepair, but encompassed with recollections, would under his renovating hand make such a residence for his lady wife as no ancient noble could command in the vicinage of town. A lease for years was first secured and then the fee. In 1755 Fox became Secretary of State, but valuing opulence above all distinction, he let himself down into the sinecure clerkship of the Pells in Ireland, worth £2000 a year for life, and the Paymaster-Generalship in England, whose percentages on all moneys paid out of the Treasury, and all subsidies to foreign states, together with the use of floating balances left in his hands, enabled him in a few years to heap up wealth untold.¹ To keep his places, and to advance withal his connections and adherents, he voted sometimes with Newcastle, sometimes with Bute, but always with the King. Offers of the first place were more than once made to him, but in vain; he kept fast hold of what was best worth holding; and not without great difficulty and undying grudge towards former friends, he was at last induced to relax his clutch upon being made a peer. Tired of an ungrateful world, he resolved to trouble himself no more with its affairs, and his precocious son Charles James having already coaxed him to defray large gambling debts, he was ready to dispose of his house in town which he no longer wanted. Throughout his official career he had been the contemporary and intimate of Sir Matthew Lamb, who purchased Bocket in the same year that he began restoring the "brave old house at Kensington."²

After he had betaken himself thither he sometimes let the house in Piccadilly, and when his sons Stephen and Charles first came into Parliament they took up their residence there. But at length he disposed of it for a considerable sum in 1770 to the son of his old friend, from whom it thenceforth bore the name of Melbourne House. The courtyard in front was at that time inclosed by gates, and the space now covered by the chambers of the Albany was a garden having an entrance opposite Savile Row. In its adornment large sums were lavished by Lady Melbourne with no ordinary taste and skill. Cipriani, who enjoyed a high reputation in his special walk of art, and whose substantial forms of nymph and cherub his countryman Bartolozzi had made familiar to the public eye, undertook to paint the ceiling of the ball-room. Wheatley, as eminent for his versatility in landscape, embellished several of the other apartments, while to Rebecca, fast rising into note under royal favour as a humorist in fresco, the remaining decorations were assigned. And then began that round of hospitalities of which for many years there seemed to be no end. Lord Melbourne boasted that on his marriage he had given the whole of his wife's fortune back to her in diamonds. He was very

¹ "In time of war the office yielded thirty, forty, and even fifty thousand pounds in one year to its fortunate possessor."—Earl Russell, 'Life and Times of C. J. Fox,' vol. i. p. 2.

² H. Walpole, May 5th, 1747.

proud of her attractions, and cared not what expenditure contributed to enhance the *éclat* of her position. Sir Joshua became a greater favourite than ever, and, with other men of genius, was made welcome always to festive gatherings where the crowd went and came, and often to the friendlier receptions of the few. He painted in 1776 a third portrait of Lady Melbourne, holding her son by the hand, which was engraved in mezzotinto by Finlayson. Though less attitudinised, it is upon the whole less pleasing than those already mentioned. Lord Melbourne belonged to the Dilettanti and other clubs which consisted mainly of artists and men of letters. He was fond of the drama, and liberally befriended not a few of those who made it their profession. In politics he took no deep or earnest interest, attending irregularly at Westminster, and voting with his malcontent friends at Brooks's two or three times in the session. He had had in fact no training to business of any kind, and easily fell into habits of indolent dissipation, which he never probably made any serious effort to break through. At Almack's he played faro with Lord Stavordale, who once at a sitting lost £11,000, and on winning it back in a single hand at hazard swore at his ill luck, for "if he had been playing deep he might have won millions."¹ His cousin, Charles Fox, shone equally there and in the House of Commons.

The new nobility thought it became them to be more lavish than the old. Without being singular, Lord Melbourne indulged in all the pleasures of a pleasure-seeking time. During half the year he had more enjoyment in shooting-parties at Melbourne, or drawing the fox-covers of Hertfordshire, than in late hours in town. He was, upon the whole, a good-for-little, apathetic, kindly man, who never had a quarrel in his life, and who probably never lay awake an hour fretting about anything. By George Selwyn he continued to be returned for Luggershall, with any one else who was acceptable to Lord North; and having no trouble about his own seat, he was readily persuaded to help those who had difficulty in gaining or keeping theirs. At the election for Herts of 1774 he proposed Mr. Plumer, in a short and sensible speech, said to be the best made on the occasion. His friend and neighbour Sir John Seabright performed the same service for Mr. Halsey, while Mr. Ratcliffe proposed Lord Grimstone; the Cowper and Dacre interest being on the one side, and all the influence of Hatfield on the other. The day's amusement was said to have cost £4,000, and the two first-named candidates were returned. Calvert and Seabright came in for the borough, and thus a very useful contingent in support of Government was secured.

Meanwhile the additional buildings and external improvements at Brocket were completed, and its fair mistress longed to render it all beautiful within. Mortimer designed, and with the assistance of Wheatley painted, the allegoric groups which decorate the ceiling of the centre drawing-room; and by degrees, to use the expression of

¹ H. Walpole to H. Mann, February 2nd, 1770.

her illustrious adviser in artistic matters, "the walls being hung with pictures, came to be hung with thoughts."

Throughout the American war, Lord Melbourne when he voted had supported ministers, and at its disastrous close did not desert them. Increased taxation and accumulating debt weighed heavily upon commerce, whose wings were continually clipped at sea by the privateers. Petitions for retrenchment and peace poured in from many counties and large towns. Burke persuaded the chiefs of opposition to espouse the principles of economic reform, and though Shelburne was defeated in his proposal in the Lords, Dunning (his nominee for Calne) carried by eighteen, after hot debate, his memorable resolution, that by means of sinecures and pensions "the influence of the Crown had increased and ought to be diminished." In the minority we find the noble member for Luggershall. Burke's Retrenchment Bill to carry into effect the resolution was resisted at every stage. The king, incensed beyond measure at the arguments used on the occasion, which he said were personally aimed against himself, bade Lord North be of good heart, keep up the conflict, and things would mend. He did so for another year, Lord Melbourne and the members for Herts, both county and town, lending him their aid in the struggle to defer the threatened change.

In the new Parliament chosen during the autumn the number on ministerial supporters was not much increased; and it was more than ever necessary to insure the fidelity of those who had been faithful found. Decorations and promotions were liberally bestowed. Several creations and steps in the peerage had been promised; and in November, Horace Walpole, dining with the Lucans, heard, probably from Lord Clermont—a man equally well informed of moves at Court and of odds at Newmarket—that Lord Melbourne was about to be made a Viscount, and in time would read *En voilà pour aujourd'hui*. In the same breath he adds, Lord Clermont told them that Scipio had first introduced toothpicks from Spain, a fact he did not know before or that his Lordship knew Scipio to be anybody but a racehorse. The *Gazette* before Christmas ratified the rumour.

Melbourne House became one of the gayest and most brilliant centres of fashion. Its indolent and fastidious master cared comparatively little for the festivities and frivolities that charmed his wife. Socially, if not yet politically ambitious, she gradually drew around her all the fairest of her own sex, and the best flatterers of the other. Of these, Lord Egremont earliest won and latest held her confidence and regard. He told her in looks more reliable than words how deeply he was touched by her wit and beauty; and beautiful she was in the early summer of her prime, as none can but believe who have gazed at her picture by Sir Joshua. Too often left alone, she easily believed in the friendship and devotion of her accomplished and eloquent admirer, who, jilted in early life by the only woman, as he said, whom he ever unselfishly loved, learned to disguise an ineffable cynicism in the specious show of delight he felt but half in art, and the splendid profusion in which his heritage enabled him to indulge.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY SURROUNDINGS.

Birth and childhood—Prince of Wales's household—Guests and intimates—Class-fellows at Eton—Mrs. Damer—Lord Egremont—Exchange of mansions—Prize Declamation at Cambridge—A winter at Glasgow.

ON the 15th of March, 1779, Lady Melbourne's second son was born, and at St. James's font received the name of William. Peniston was then nine years old. Gentle, intelligent, and engaging, he began to concentrate all his father's hopes and wishes, and daily to become more and more a source of joy and pride. The Viscount never tired of being told that his boy was like him; and in no companionship did he find pleasure so unmixed. His heir must of course be sent to Eton, and in due time to Cambridge; and he must have masters if he would learn classics and accomplishments. But his own recollections of the interval between childhood and manhood were nearly bare of all that related to learning of any description, except that its acquisition was irksome and a bore. If his son cared as little for books as he had done, he could as well afford it, and would probably be as happy. Peniston grew apace; held himself well, had a high-bred look and air, was loved by everybody, and by every dog about the place; would ride his pony at anything, and no doubt in time would be a capital shot. How he loved the boy, and how the young affectionate nature, cheerful and pliant and easily pleased, coiled round each fibre of paternal being, none saw or cared but she of whom it came. Soon she felt, however, that if the little stranger was to be prized and loved, all must come from her. And when he began to look around him and laugh up into her eyes and play at her feet, woman of the world as she was, her heart softened, all her best impulses were moved; and she vowed within herself devotion to the bringing-up and future destiny of her second son. Nor was it long before tiny sparks were visible of a nature very different from that which Peniston in infancy had shown. Let alone, he would amuse himself readily. Eat when not hungry, no power could make him; but when he began he did uncommonly well. Not fretful, peevish or cross, he was nevertheless healthily troublesome. He liked mischief, would have his way, and was often wholly unmanageable. Three years later¹ Frederick was born. As children they grew up together, for the most part at Bocket, and were much attached; their features bearing marked resemblance, and many of their mental qualities being equally akin.

George III. had for some time been anxiously engaged with frugal plans of a provisional establishment for his eldest son. Economy in

¹ April 17th, 1782.

the prince's expenditure might be combined, he thought, with a continuance of parental control over his ways of life. The heir apparent might very well continue to live at St. James's or at Windsor, being allowed as much for robes and privy purse as he himself had had; and he would give him sixteen horses instead of four. But he might do with an equerry and two or three footmen less, not having a house to keep of his own.

"The great difficulty I find," wrote the king, "in having persons whose private conduct I think may with safety be placed about a young person, is not surprising, as I thank Heaven my morals and course of life have but little resembled those too prevalent in the present age; and certainly of all objects in this life the one I have most at heart, is to form my children that they may be useful examples and worthy of imitation. I should therefore be scrupulous as to the private lives of those I place about my son, though in other cases I never wish to be informed, unless of those great enormities that must make every man of principle shun the company of such persons, but in the case of my children, my happiness as well as the good of the public is materially concerned in this investigation."¹

What Lord North would have recommended, had his advice been really desired, it is useless to surmise; he probably thought that while the prince was denied an establishment of his own, he might as well be surrounded by those whose tastes were congenial, and whose position in life rendered it easy for them to contribute to pleasures which else he might seek in worse company. Many noble mansions were ready to welcome him, and Melbourne House was gayest of the gay. Its *poco curante* owner was proud to receive him; Lady Melbourne was charmed with his visits; and he soon learned to make himself at home. Sheridan and Fitzpatrick, Selwyn and Hare, contributed each in his special way to the mirth of the table, and whatever was fascinating and fair in the Whig saloons of the day was certain to be found in the company of the new Viscountess. There also frequently came Francis, Duke of Bedford, and Charles Fox, then in the ripening promise of popularity and power, though damaged in character by the recklessness of his private life, and, in spite of all his father's liberality towards him, without a guinea.

As the time approached when the Prince of Wales would come of age, it became necessary to provide for him a separate establishment; and Lord Rockingham is understood to have advised that such an allowance should be asked from Parliament as would enable him to maintain with befitting splendour his position as the first subject of the Crown. George II. had enjoyed £100,000 a year when the public revenues were far less, and when money went much farther in the purchase of every necessary and luxury of life. His son Frederick, though an object of parental dislike, received an equal allowance, and George III. himself had had the same; but the minister vainly urged

¹ Letter to Lord North.

that these precedents should be followed. The King was dissatisfied with the conduct of the Prince, and distrustful of the companions of his choice. Of late he had been much in the society of Charles Fox, who, far from deprecating the suspicion with which he thought himself unjustly regarded, went out of his way to declare that the grant of £50,000 a year moved by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was inadequate, that the hope of economy on which it was founded would not be realized, and that sooner or later Parliament would be called on to relieve embarrassment which its improvident parsimony was about to render unavoidable.

Had it remained with him, he certainly would have advised an establishment more adequate and suitable; but the person most proper to decide on the business was of a very different opinion, and therefore it was his duty to submit.

The imprudence and unseemliness of such language from a Secretary of State did not prevent its being cheered warmly by those who began to call themselves the Prince's friends. The Commons would readily have voted one hundred thousand a year had they been suffered to do so. The King, however, adhered to his resolve, and beside the separate revenue of the Duchy of Cornwall, could only be induced to add the colonelcy of the 10th Dragoons, the only military appointment the prince ever obtained and which he continued to hold until he ascended the throne. For his residence his father gave him the well-known house, originally built by Henry Boyle, Lord Carleton, on a piece of ground leased to him in 1709 by Queen Anne for thirty-one years at £35 a year. It was described as part and parcel of the royal garden near St. James's Palace. His nephew, Lord Burlington, subsequently inhabited the mansion and gave it to his mother, from whom it was bought in 1732 by Frederick, Prince of Wales, being, as was said, delightfully situated for a place of courtly pleasure; but the building itself was tame and poor, hardly any place being capable of greater improvements, and hardly any standing in more need of them.¹

There the widowed Princess resided till her death. The gardens reached to those of Marlborough House, and constituted its chief attraction; for near the approach stood a number of dwellings not of the most sightly aspect. Holland designed a colonnade to serve as a screen, and erected the portico which in later years was transferred to the façade of the National Gallery. When finished, Horace Walpole pronounced the new palace in Pall Mall the most perfect in Europe; the three chief apartments and the music-room looking on the secluded grounds, and the vestibule, hall, and staircase superb. "But where the money was to come from, he conceived not; all the tin mines in Cornwall would not pay a quarter."² This consideration gave his Royal Highness small concern. The Chancellor of the Exchequer

¹ 'Critical Review of Public Buildings,' p. 75, 1734.

² Letter to Lady Ossory, September 17th.

had had full warning of what was likely to happen ; and happen it should. To celebrate his birthday the Prince was resolved upon a feast ; and Carlton House being still in the hands of the workmen, the dinner was given to a numerous company at the White Hart, Windsor, whereat, as Lord Melbourne loved long afterwards to tell, a turtle was served weighing four hundredweight—a present from the East India Board.

Appointments in the household of the Prince were coveted by all who had interest at Court or with Opposition ; and many were the jealousies and disappointments which they caused. Lord Lewisham was made Warden of the Stannaries and Lord Melbourne was named Gentleman of the Bedchamber, with Lord Spencer Hamilton, son of the sixth duke of his name. The place of the latter was subsequently filled by Lord Charles Somerset, and some years later by Lord Clermont.

At the ball given on taking possession of his new home the heir apparent received the congratulations of all that was best born and most beautiful in the land, as sung in after-years by the granddaughter of his wittiest and merriest confidant—

They crowd around me like young girls peeping,
And seem to question me which is most fair !

On none were admiring eyes more fixed than on Lady Melbourne, then perhaps at the zenith of her popularity and attraction.

Maria Cosway, wife of the well-known miniature painter, had exhibited not long before at the Academy two or three historical pictures giving evidence of much originality and feeling. Her acquaintance was sought by many persons of distinction, and it became the fashion to bid high for the possession of her works. The Duchess of Devonshire visited her studio ; and at the request of the Prince she painted some remarkable portraits. One of them was that of Lady Melbourne, which remained at Carlton House until removed to the Corridor at Windsor.

At the general election of 1784 no contest provoked so much passion or proved so memorable as that of Westminster.¹ At the end of the tenth day's poll, Fox had three hundred and eighteen votes less than Sir Cecil Wray. The exultation of his opponents knew no bounds, but their rejoicings were premature. Surprise, disappointment, and rage bewildered the adherents of the Whig chief, and his cause would have been irretrievably lost but for allies who had never taken part in such a fray before. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, then without compeer as queen of fashion, openly undertook with the aid of her sister Lady Duncannon and Mrs. Crewe to canvass for the leader of Opposition ; Lady Melbourne, Mrs. Damer and others took a part less prominent, but not less enthusiastic. On the twentieth day the majority was reduced to eighty-four ; the struggle became keener than

¹ March, 1784.

ever; and the profusion of blandishments and inducements were on both sides unparalleled; for, the example once set of female interference, the Countess of Salisbury and other Tory ladies sought to exert a counter-ruling influence over the electors. On the thirtieth day Lord Hood was still head of the poll, while Fox was but one hundred and sixty-six above his other competitor. And when on the fortieth day his victory was announced, it was by a majority of no more than two hundred and thirty-six, out of thirteen thousand votes. The protracted suspense, and the violence of the passions which had been excited during the conflict, together with the bitterness of disappointment, caused, ere its termination, by the tidings of multiplied defeat in other cities and towns, all served to intensify rather than abate the delirium of triumph. The carriages of the Duchess of Portland and the Duchess of Devonshire, each drawn by six horses, took part in the procession from the hustings to Piccadilly, where, in front of Devonshire House, the orator was received by his "Grand Electress" and presented by the Prince of Wales with a wreath of laurel.

Meanwhile in the clear air of Hertfordshire the younger children of the household thrived apace; and at each recurring holiday-time delighted more and more the ever onward and upward spirit of their mother. Peniston was too old for companionship with the youngsters, but their joyous freaks amused him, and he entered often into their childish play. Their mother was delighted, and she persuaded Reynolds, though overlaid with engagements more than he could execute, to undertake a group illustrating in their varied ages the fraternal love of her children. By some it has been said that the idea originated with himself, as in the well-known painting which keeps in memory, at Holland House, the youthful gallantry of Charles Fox towards his cousin, Lady Sarah Lennox, beneath the window whence her mother is observing them. We only know that the veteran President of the Academy entered genially into the realization of the design, and made two or three studies of the pranksome younger boys and of their more staid and thoughtful elder. Peniston is portrayed as encouraging Frederick and William to romp about him, while there is in his features the mingled look of amusement at their gambols and of dreams less childish passing through his mind. The "Affectionate Brothers" was one of the last pictures finished by Sir Joshua, and in conception, grace, and vividness of expression, it is eminently worthy of his fame. It was first engraved in mezzotinto by Bartolozzi; and subsequently in a smaller size by S. M. Reynolds. The youngest is in the dress and attitude of a spoilt child still an inmate of the nursery; while the vivacity and force of the picture are concentrated in the unruly youngster, who, according to Sir Joshua, gave him more trouble than he liked, and whom he used to bribe into brief intervals of quiet by promises of another ride on his foot. And he looks it still—a hearty, gladsome, wayward little fellow, with a soft roguish eye and gesture full of provocation.

A few months afterwards, George, not yet three years old, was

painted by Maria Cosway, in the allegoric style she affected, as the "Infant Bacchus." The picture was said to be particularly happy, and was probably as like as the delineation of chubby and rosy features is by those who love them usually said to be.

Emily, the only daughter who survived the period of infancy, was not born until 1787. In expression and in spirit she bore a striking resemblance to her mother, and as she grew up attracted and attained the attachment of all around her. In after-life William and his sister found innumerable points of sympathy, and her influence with him was great.

Of those who were intimate during his boyhood at Melbourne House, he remembered none in after-life with greater pleasure than the widowed daughter of General Conway. While yet a girl, her desire to excel in art had received a singular impulse from some passing words of David Hume. In a morning walk she saw him give a shilling to an Italian boy who offered him some small casts from the antique for sale, asking thoughtlessly what he saw worth encouraging in such a calling. The philosopher gently rebuked her, saying that, valueless as these cheap copies seemed to be, they were the produce of genius and skill beyond any she possessed; and that no modern attainments enabled one now to produce anything comparable to them. Piqued by his reproof, she resolved to try what she could do in modelling, and after some little time presented him with a head, in wax, of merits so promising that he made amends by cordial praise and incentives to pursue her studies in that direction. Her marriage with the eldest son of Lord Dorchester, though it brought her early into society, did not change her predilections in art. John Damer was a gambler, whose premature death left her without children, to follow the bent of her own tastes and inclinations. Her father's greatest friend was Horace Walpole, who took an interest in all she did, and by his advice she studied the elementary principles of anatomy from Cruikshank, and details of drawing and form from Cerrachi and Bacon. With Mrs. Crew she sojourned long in Italy, chiefly for the enjoyment and instruction its churches, palaces, and museums afford those who love art with devotion. Returning to England, she resumed with persevering zeal her amateur vocation. Her busts of Lady Elizabeth Foster, Lady Melbourne, and her mother, Lady Aylesbury, still attest the unaffected freedom and the uneffeminate delicacy of her style.

It was a caprice of the time to paint or mould likenesses in allegoric character, and young Peniston Lamb was represented by her in marble with the classic insignia of Mercury. The heads in relief of Thame and Isis on the keystone of Henley Bridge were the work of her chisel; and she took especial pleasure in transferring to marble the forms of her dumb favourites, though in this species of delineation she never perhaps attained the life-like touch of Lady Dacre. For a present on his birthday she brought Horace Walpole an osprey, whose plumage she had elaborated with peculiar care; and in acknowledgment he

engraved its pedestal with the graceful flattery,

Non mihi Praxiteles fecit, at Anna Damer.

Her house was the centre of attraction for artists and men of letters, to not a few of whom she rejoiced in rendering timely and essential service. Angelica Kauffmann painted the best portrait of Mrs. Damer which remains; and through her the latter became acquainted with Maria Cosway, whose craving for admission within the exclusive fences of society she helped oftentimes to gratify. Mrs. Damer was one of Lady Melbourne's earliest, truest, and most intimate friends. When Bocket was adorning she was ever ready with suggestion or caution; always with a reason, and that a good one, for any deviation from customary style or breach of conventional rules of embellishment, she sympathized with her friend's love of magnificence, but her finer taste preferred harmony to glitter, and subdued colouring to fantastic show.

Both were fond of theatricals, and in the impersonation of character on the private stage had few equals. Fox, Fitzpatrick, and Sheridan, with all the young men of talent or of *ton* that were led by their example, were ready to aid by pen or voice or sympathetic presence whatever cast their fair friends chose. For the veteran critic of Strawberry Hill, the child of his greatest friend had the greatest charm, and he was seldom better content than when complaining that he was put to his wits' end at Twickenham to find at short notice a dinner good enough for her and Lady Melbourne.

Egremont was a frequent visitor in studio as well as salon. Reynolds has preserved the expression of his features, which were singularly fine; and Fox is known to have said of him at eight-and-twenty, that, though he had no experience in business, and had never been in office, he would rather take his judgment on the India Bill than that of most other men he knew. Petworth, rebuilt in the preceding reign by the Duke of Somerset, had been filled by him with treasures of painting and carving such as few country houses in England could boast; and the delight of its new possessor was still further to enrich its halls and chambers with whatever seemed to him most noble in design and beautiful in execution of the sculpture and painting of his day. He loved the companionship of men of wit and art, and took less pleasure in playing the patron than the host. Gainsborough and Flaxman were his guests for days and weeks together. With the entertainment of a palace they found a school where they might study, by what light and at what hours they would, the masterpieces of Holbein, Van Eyck and Antonio More, Titian, Correggio, Hobbema, and Claude.

In early life Lord Egremont professed to be no more than a man of pleasure, given to hospitality, fond of the turf, content to be a cause of war amongst strategic mothers. Rather shy and taciturn, many outshone him in the ball-room, none in the morning ride or garden

walk. There was in his voice and manner, say his contemporaries, that fascination for women, and even for men, which neither knew how to resist. At Melbourne House he was a constant guest, and through a long course of years his friendship and sympathy were never wanting. Old Horace snarls at him in his characteristic way as "a worthless young fellow;"¹ his offence being that, having proposed to Walpole's niece, Lady Maria Waldegrave, he had seemed to grow cold, whereupon the lady's relatives in a pet threatened to break off the match, which, when he took them at their word, they much repented. He remained unmarried, but his tastes were eminently social, and one of his greatest pleasures was to invite not only his friends, but their children, to his princely house in Sussex, and to witness the varied enjoyment of pastimes provided for all ages. Some of the brightest scenes of William Lamb's childhood were in Petworth Park, where he and his brothers used to gambol all day long. Arthur Young had been a frequent visitor, and under his advice the old deer-park was disafforested, and Petworth, like Holkam and Woburn, lent its name to a school of improved agriculture. Except at Wentworth, there was not to be found in England stabling so extensive or a stud so numerous or high-bred; and its owner liked to be reminded that few great races had been run in his time in which some measure of success was not ascribable to him.

In 1790 William Lamb was entered at Eton. Among his class-fellows were Charles Sumner, destined to become Archbishop of Canterbury; Charles Stuart, grandson of Lord Bute, afterwards Lord Stuart de Rothesay; and Charles Ellis, who became Lord Howard de Walden; Tullibardine, afterwards Duke of Atholl; F. Male, who enjoyed a high repute as a physician at Birmingham; and one who, in his way, attained more notoriety than any of the rest, George commonly known during the Regency as Beau Brummel. In the class above him were Henry Hallam, the historian; and Assheton Smith, well known for his scientific inventions, still more for his long-asserted leadership in the hunting-field.

A singular incident in family history occurred about this time. One day the Duke of York, a frequent guest at Piccadilly, complained to Lady Melbourne that he was tired of his residence at Whitehall; and that he longed for the possession of a house like hers, which he particularly admired. With her usual naïveté, she replied that she in her turn desired the opportunity of looking on the park every morning when she rose, and that, were it possible, she would willingly exchange the chimes at night of St. James's for those of the Abbey. His Royal Highness vowed that anything was possible to her; and recurring to the subject frequently, the Viscount, who at first treated the affair as a joke, and then as one of his wife's unaccountable whims, was persuaded to consider seriously the feasibility of making the exchange. The pleasure of the king was the first thing to be ascertained, for the

¹ Letter, July 24th, 1780.

Duke was affectionate towards his father, and a special favourite with him.

The mansion, which occupies the space between the Horse Guards and the Treasury, and which was originally built by Payne for Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh, had been vacated for the use of the Duke in 1784 by Sir Jeffery Amherst, and was thenceforth held on lease from the Crown. The entrance stood some distance back from the street, and, to please its new occupant, a circular hall and portico were added by Holland soon after he had executed the colonnade in front of Carlton House for the Prince of Wales. Lord North, cheerful as ever, though grown quite blind, heard of the changes that were making, and said when they were described to him that "things were coming to a strange pass when the Duke of York was sent to the Round House, and the Heir Apparent to the Pillory.

Before Christmas it was agreed that the proposed exchange should be carried into effect; and in the course of the ensuing autumn the transfer actually took place. His Royal Highness assigned by deed the capital messuage and premises situate at or near Whitehall, and the furniture therein, together with the Old Lottery Office, and other the premises which his Royal Highness then held or had made application to the Treasury to hold by lease from the Crown for the term of fifty years, to Viscount Melbourne, who on his part transferred and made over all that and those the messuages and tenements situate and lying between Burlington Garden and Sackville Street and between Savile Row and Piccadilly, etc. Thenceforth the titles of the two mansions were simultaneously transposed. The dwelling in Piccadilly was called York House, and subsequently the Albany; that in Whitehall took the name of its new proprietor, by which it was known during the rest of his life.

The seventeenth Parliament of Great Britain met on the 25th of November, 1790, to which were returned for Newport in the Isle of Wight Viscount Palmerston and Viscount Melbourne, whose sons, then pursuing their studies at Eton and Harrow, were destined to be associated in after-life so intimately. The Rev. Sir H. Worsley was then patron of the borough. Lord Melbourne vacated his seat in 1793, when, his son having come of age, he wished him to take his place, and Peniston was returned accordingly. The Viscount himself did not re-enter the House of Commons.

With the sons of other Whigs of quality, William was sent to Cambridge; he was entered on the 7th of July, 1796, as a fellow-commoner of Trinity, and he went into residence in the October following. It was not with him, however, during the next three years the ordinary course of pleasure and nothing more. Though he would not learn by rote, to read long and hard he was not ashamed. Already it would seem as though he had beckonings of ambition. Not a bad classic when he quitted Eton, he acquired during his stay at Trinity a fairly extended acquaintance with the ancient poets and historians whose works were then among the books of the undergraduate course. But

his studies were seldom bounded by the limits defined in lecture notice; for he was not reading for class but to satisfy his own curiosity and love of information. From mathematics he turned away with distaste and aversion somewhat similar perhaps to that which Macaulay has confessed. In preference he gave himself to ethical speculation, in which throughout his life he never ceased to take peculiar interest. The law being assigned him for a profession, and political life pointed to by his mother as within his reach not remotely beyond probation at the bar, he wished to be allowed to keep his terms in London simultaneously with those at Cambridge. No reasonable wish (seldom, probably, an unreasonable one) was refused by Lady Melbourne; and accordingly, on the 21st of July, 1797, the registry of Lincoln's Inn records that William Lamb was entered a student of law by the Right Hon. Henry Addington, Speaker of the House of Commons, one of the benchers of the Society.

At the close of Michaelmas Term, 1798, he delivered an oration in the chapel of Trinity which won the declamation prize. It was the first composition of any length or importance he had attempted, and it was subsequently printed for private circulation. The theme was "The progressive improvements of mankind." By his hearers it was received with no slight marks of favour, and by friends and kinsfolk made the occasion of kindly criticism and indiscriminating praise. Like so many youthful essays, it would doubtless have passed quickly into forgetfulness, had not a passage caught the fancy of Charles Fox, who, to the surprise and delight of its author, quoted it in his speech on the character of Francis, Duke of Bedford, when moving a new writ for Tavistock.

After exhausting the rich vocabulary of encomium, the statesman said he would conclude with applying to the present occasion a beautiful passage from the speech of a very young orator. It might, he thought, perhaps savour too much of the sanguine views of youth to stand the test of a rigid philosophical inquiry, but it was at least cheering and consolatory; and that in this instance it might be exemplified, he was confident was the sincere wish of every man who heard him.

"Crime," says he, "is a curse only to the period in which it is successful; but virtue, whether fortunate or otherwise, blesses not only its own age, but remotest posterity; and is as beneficial by its example as by its immediate effects."¹

The tone of the essay, which the sentence quoted by his illustrious friend has preserved from oblivion, is throughout hopeful and genial, rather than argumentative or profound. We catch no shadow of the desponding temper which the susceptible author must have been familiar with, just then, in the political society of Melbourne House. The vexed spirit of Burke had indeed sunk to rest; but the schism his irresistible enthusiasm and eloquence on behalf of Catholicity and

¹ 'Speeches of C. J. Fox,' vol. vi. p. 472, March 16th, 1802.

royalty as essential elements of Christian civilization, opposed in his mind to every form of democracy and every phase of sceptic thought, was still unhealed. Lord Spencer, Mr. Windham, Sir Gilbert Elliot, and the Duke of Portland had joined Mr. Pitt's administration: while the adherents of Fox were so weakened and disheartened that they had not long before, in a fit of abortive rage, formally withdrawn from attendance in Parliament: and it was among the seceders that the young essayist had opened his political eyes. It is not therefore undeserving of note that in this first effort are traceable, though undogmatically writ, the lines of confident and even sanguine faith, in moderate and steady progress, which in maturer years Lamb was found ready to defend against the opposite extremes of reaction and revolution.

At the end of Trinity Term, 1799, he took his degree, and bade farewell to Cambridge with its genial associations of culture and speculation, to return no more.¹

It was not unusual at the period in question for young men of promise to attend the open classes of philosophy and jurisprudence in one of the Scotch Universities. On quitting Westminster, Lord Henry Petty spent two years at Edinburgh before entering Trinity; and between Harrow and St. John's, the bright-eyed, laughing, but diligent Henry Temple resided for some time in the house of Dugald Stewart, notes of whose lectures he long preserved with care. Glasgow indeed no longer numbered Adam Smith among her illustrious teachers; but her reputation as a seat of learning continued to stand high; and by the wish of Lady Melbourne inquiry was made if her son could be received as a resident pupil by Professor Millar, of whose well-known work 'An Historical View of the English Government,' Fox once said, "It is dedicated to me, and written on the best and surest principles." Lord Lauderdale wrote:—

"There is a young man who wishes much to reside in your house next winter. He is a younger son of Lord Melbourne's. He has the reputation and I believe really possesses uncommon talents. He means to go to the English Bar with a view to follow the law as a profession. He is the only person I have ever yet recommended to you of whom I think I could with any safety say that you will have real comfort and satisfaction in having him as a pupil. I wish you to write me a letter such as I may show to them, stating whether you can have room for him the time he must be at Glasgow, etc. It is the Duke of Bedford who has applied to me about it."²

The matter being arranged, William Lamb and his brother Frederick spent the winter of 1799 and part of the succeeding one in Scotland, devoting his attention specially to the Professor's lectures on history

¹ He is entered in the registry of the University as having matriculated on the 29th of June, 1799, and having graduated on the 1st of July following. It is clear that his matriulation must have been accidentally omitted at the correct time, and that he matriculated just in time to enable him to take his degree.

² From Walthamstow, June 11th, 1799.

and law and to those of Mylne on metaphysics. In the Collegiate Debating Club he took a constant and brilliant part, being distinguished for aptitude of historic illustration, and for caustic humour in reply.

In the society of which his mother was the centre round which the most eloquent, witty, and enthusiastic men of their time revolved, a young man of susceptible nature could not fail to be imbued with opinions, many of them extreme, and few of which that savoured of forecast were destined to stand the test of world-wide victory and defeat. Pitt's prestige as a Foreign Minister was shaken, and the strength of Republican France reorganized under Bonaparte daily struck terror more and more into the old Monarchies of Europe, which England had involved herself in unprecedented debt to sustain, without being able to save from humiliation and loss. The chiefs of Opposition, who consoled their exile from power, as Fox used to say, by literature, wit, theatricals, and pretty women, were never tired of denouncing the infatuation of protracted war against the irresistible movement of the age, led by the greatest genius of the time; and the wretched condition to which misrule had reduced Ireland, though still but imperfectly known to English good society, formed a daily theme of railing and ridicule highly calculated to enlist the sympathy and imagination of a young aspirant to political life just out of his collegiate classics, and just entering on a study of Constitutional history. In letters to his mother, William Lamb occasionally indulged in what he thought no doubt spirited and sagacious views of public affairs at home and abroad, more vehement than profound. The First Consul's offer to negotiate for peace won his intense admiration. "Ministers, I take it, were put into a great dilemma by the proposal of Bonaparte. The Letter was temperate and respectful in the highest degree: no shadow of insult or even of boasting. No conditions were proposed which could be seized upon as a pretext for so abruptly refusing to treat. How could they answer to the people for this peremptory, unexplained rejection of all negotiation? They have, I suppose, entered into strict connections, certainly with Russia, and perhaps with Austria, by whose means they certainly expect to restore the Monarchy. These connections depend but on a hazard; any suspicion of their sincerity would break them off immediately. If they had once negotiated, the coalition would most probably have been dissolved. Every one would have thought of shifting for himself. This I should guess to be the danger, the fear of which has forced them upon the desperate measure they have taken—a measure which appears of such moment that, if I did not know that one always exaggerates the dangers of the day, I should think it must either lead them to the scaffold, or make them the perpetual, absolute tyrants of this country."¹ Under these circumstances he was clearly of opinion that the time was come for Mr. Fox to quit his secessional exile at St. Ann's Hill, and come

¹ 14th Jan., 1800, Sanders: Melbourne Papers.

forward with the certainty of having more friends and followers than ever. Can any one doubt the look of pride with which Lady Melbourne showed such proofs of patriotic wisdom to come, though still in the bud ; or who can fail to contrast the tone of such prematurities with that of the singularly cautious Minister of after days ? But there is an entry in one of his note-books of a few years later showing how keenly he lamented the political errors of any earlier time ; and throughout the whole course of the Peninsular War he expressed the warmest wishes for our arms, and for those of our allies in Germany.¹

CHAPTER III.

A YOUNGER SON.

*Firing at the King—Brocket races—A play of doubtful authorship—
Beau Brummel—Call to the Bar—Lady Caroline Ponsonby—
Death of elder brother.*

LADY MELBOURNE'S aspirations for distinction and influence renewed their youth as she gazed upon her favourite son. Accustomed to flattery, and no longer easily deceived thereby, she probably gave little heed to looks and words of admiration of which he was the object, from daughters who longed to dance with him, and fathers who liked being asked to dine ; and doubtless she as little recked the smile-enamelled fear with which he was regarded as a fascinating younger son, by every shrewd mother of quality. What would he settle into ? what would he do in life ? would he go high ? would he go far ? Would her spirit, would her name live again in him, as the mirror told her that his features would ? and she thought, with a sigh, he will be young when I am old. She studied his nature, antithetically mixed as it was, and full of qualities and dispositions the most opposite—not as an artist, to catch the fleeting expression, or as an analyst, to note and weigh the elements continually apt to effervesce, but as a woman of the world, whose maternal love was purified from worldliness where he was concerned. For his sake she wished him to be invulnerable before he went into the fray ; and yet she could not bring herself to forego the hope that his reliance upon her would never grow less fond.

On the 15th of May, an attempt was made by a man named Hatfield, who had formerly been in the Guards, to assassinate the King as he entered his box at Drury Lane Theatre. The news spread

¹ Earl Cowper : 'Sketch of Melbourne' in 'Nineteenth Century,' Jan. 1884.

rapidly, and soon reached Melbourne House, where the Prince of Wales was dining. Lady Melbourne instantly ordered her carriage, and conjured her royal guest to lose not a moment in repairing to the theatre, where his Majesty was said to have resolved on remaining with the Queen as if nothing had happened. The Prince, who was on bad terms with his father, affected to disbelieve the rumour, and made various excuses for not going; but the good sense of Lady Melbourne prevailed, and by desire of the Prince, William Lamb, who happened to be at table, accompanied him. On arriving at the theatre he found the Duke of York already there, and after tendering their congratulations to his Majesty on his narrow escape, they withdrew to the apartment where the offender was in custody, and remained during the preliminary examination of witnesses who saw him present and fire the pistol. Hatfield recognised the Duke, under whom he had served, and said that he was a good fellow. His lunacy, real or feigned, was confidently asserted by the King, who showed no emotion, and laughed at Queen Charlotte's supposing "that any one but a madman would shoot him." Before midnight the Prince returned to Whitehall to thank his hostess for persuading him to earn for once the praise of filial duty. His young equerry on the occasion was wont to tell the story with humour all his own, making the best of it for his Royal Highness, and dwelling with affectionate emphasis on the promptitude and tact shown by his mother. He was thenceforth more frequently included in the invitations to Carlton House, and became unluckily an early partaker in its revelries.

Up to this time Hertfordshire contained no racecourse except Barnet, which had never been a favourite with the gentlemen of the Turf, and which, owing partly to its proximity to town, grew every year less agreeable and worse regulated. The Prince declared that it was a reproach to a county so accessible without being suburban that it did not supply an eligible place of meeting. In reply to his appeal, Lord Melbourne was persuaded to devote a portion of his park particularly well suited to the purpose required; and in the autumn of 1799 a subscription list was opened for Cup and sweepstakes, headed by his Royal Highness, the Duke of Bedford, Lords Egremont, Clarendon, and Burford, Sir G. Wombwell, Mr. Hale, Hon. G. Watson, etc.; Lord Melbourne and Mr. Hale, of King's Walden, agreeing to act as stewards. Hospitalities lavish and prolonged contributed to insure success. Next year the county members, Mr. Thomas Brand and Mr. Peniston Lamb, were stewards, and each following season brought new patrons—the Duke of St. Albans, Colonel Whalley, Lords Cowper and Ossulston, and Mr. Heathcote. When these assemblages began William Lamb was not at home, and at no period of his life did he take much interest in the events or controversies of the turf.

Mrs. Damer still continued to be one of Lady Melbourne's kindest, as she was one of her oldest, friends. On his death Lord Orford left Strawberry Hill to her, who had for him no greater charm than her rare talents for dramatic representation. Mrs. Damer's taste had not

changed with advancing years, and it was by her that the pretty theatre was added to the house at Twickenham. One of the first performances upon its boards was a two-act comedy found among Walpole's papers, entitled 'Fashionable Friends.' The manuscript was not in his handwriting, and it bore no author's name. The piece, however, was well got up, and pronounced inimitable by the guests bidden to the scene. Charles Kemble was amongst them; and wanting just then something novel, he conceived the idea of obtaining leave from the executors to bring out the play as a posthumous work by the author of 'The Castle of Otranto.' It was accordingly produced in April, 1802, at Drury Lane, Kemble himself and Mrs. Jordan sustaining the principal parts.

Its reception was unfavourable, and after a second representation it was withdrawn. Some of the criticisms on its tone and tendency seemed to have piqued the executors into its publication, as the best means of refuting the harsh insinuations of which it had been made the object. This was stated in the advertisement to the edition published by Ridgway, of which but few were sold; and even the glimmer of its ephemeral existence is now difficult to catch among the relics of dramatic mortality, and its ashes need not have been disturbed, but for the recent ascription of the authorship to William Lamb.¹ Nothing in Walpole's diary or letters furnishes any warrant for the assertion; nor is there in the memoirs of the time any proof, direct or circumstantial, on the point. If, as appears not improbable, the piece was an adaptation from the French, it may have been a youthful essay in composition given to the octogenarian critic by some too partial friend; and never having been returned, it is just conceivable that Charles Kemble was misled as to its acting qualities by learning that it came from Lord Orford's library. But how it should have ever come to be associated with the name of his youthful acquaintance does not appear. There is nothing either very good or very bad, very dull or very adroit, in the construction of the play, which turns on ordinary incidents of life in the luxurious quarter of the capital; and it contains some smart and cynical turns of expression, but hardly one deserving of remembrance. Mrs. Jordan may have done her best to make the character she played attractive, and Chippendale and Fisher are not said to have been wanting in their way. But the only wonder is how it should have occurred to the manager of Drury Lane to take the trouble of trying, at some expense, whether it would do to attract or amuse an audience.

Brummel, who was born in 1778, was more than a year older in ways and ideas. Already fastidiousness in diet and in dress possessed him. While his playmates roamed or rollicked with laughing disregard of drenching or bemiring, and happy forgetfulness of what figure they cut as they got back to supper, the incipient dandy was ready to elude on any convenient pretence the apprehended soaking, not so

¹ Allibone: 'Dramatic Authors.'

much on account of discomfort as at the loss of dignity. In every particular of person and apparel, he would come into class finished *ad unguem*; and the pocket-money Tullibardine, Ellis or Lamb spent on sweets or sports the premature coxcomb devoted to knickknacks of the toilet. He was never known to hack his desk or cut his name on the wall, while every other boy had ruined half a dozen penknives in the process; and Assheton Smith was wont to tell long years after, how well he recollected that Brummel never was flogged through the school, a circumstance which the veteran fox-hunter thought little to his credit. But he was liked, in spite of his priggishness, by his tutor and his dame, to whom he gave no trouble, and by class-fellows, with whom he was always ready to share what he had, making fun out of nothing to keep up the general glee. In discharge of the duties of fag, especially "as toaster of bread and cheese, nobody ever equalled him." Lamb, like others, often quizzed him for his formality, but on the whole, remembered him as not a bad fellow. He spent a year at Oriel, where he did nothing but break the rules; and completed his education in the Prince's regiment of Hussars. By the time William Lamb came back from Glasgow, and began to saunter down the shady side of St. James's Street, the "Beau," having come to maturity, was on the sunny side, just bursting into blossom. He had sold his captaincy, disentangling himself, as he said, of the inhuman trappings of war, abjured the levelling appellation of "Mister," and had set about squandering his fortune in the most exquisite manner. The *entrée* at Carlton House was all very well in its way; but he meant to hold his court at White's, and to make himself king of fashion.

Between the Etonians there was little in common but the zest for sarcasm and the love of raillery; this was enough, however, to make five minutes of each other's company constantly pleasant, and they met every day. Brummel gave dinners of six or eight at his little mansion in Chesterfield Street, where more than one royal highness came; while Melbourne House was one of the few so fortunate as to have a *chef* worthy of his approval. The refinement and versatility of his impertinence, though it seldom amounted to wit, amused his old class-fellow. Lamb too had his foppery, though of a wholly different kind. He could not help knowing that he was uncommonly good-looking; but his vanity disdained ornaments or oddities adopted by others to gain notice. An air of carelessness of what he wore, and how he looked and what he said, was his earliest affectation, and it stuck by him to the last; for nobody ever happened to have coats that fitted better, books more full of ideas or worthier of being remembered; and in conversation, words more nicely chosen and heavily shot with meaning. But, from the outset, some vague and unaccountable wish to be thought indolent and idle appears to have had a witchery for him, which in the midst of the highest responsibilities he never entirely shook off. Dandyism he always looked upon as a species of acting, amusing when consummate, and surprising in a person of talent and skill, but simply ridiculous in itself, and despicable in a man capable

of better things. To vie with Brummel, or Alvanley, or Mildmay, never occurred to him, but he enjoyed their society, and in a certain sense admired and applauded the way they played their parts. The Beau had a fancy for enriching his album with contributions in verse by contemporaries of rank and distinction; and thus were preserved some Anacreontics and other stanzas, serious or playful, from the pens of Sheridan, Canning, Payne, Knight, and Lady Granville, which else might have dropped out of remembrance.

At all periods of his life Lamb loved classic verse; Greek most in youth, English most in age. The melody of tenderness and the majesty of thought could in turn melt him to softness or stir him into passion. Rhythm had for his ear a spell, which even in the turn of his merriest jest is traceable; and many fragments of versification remain to belie the foolish sneer that he was one who had not music in his soul.

TRANSLATED FROM ANACREON.

Come, painter, who with skilful hand
Canst rival even nature's art;
Come, painter, draw as I command,
The absent mistress of my heart.

Paint first each soft and jetty tress,
With which her graceful head is crown'd;
If colours can so much express,
Oh! paint them breathing odours round.

Above her cheek, full, lovely, fair,
Where modest blushes reddening glow,
Beneath her mildly curling hair,
Describe with skill her ivory brow.

Ah! how to imitate her face
Thy chiefest science will be tried;
Between her brows the middle space
Nor quite confound nor quite divide.

Here let the eyelid's lash be shown;
Here let her semblance bear complete,
Dark arching eyebrows like her own,
Which meeting, scarcely seem to meet.

But, painter, do not here forget
To give her eye its native flame,
Azure, Minerva-like, and yet
As melting as the Paphian dame.

Her nose and cheek then fashion well—
That white as milk, and roscate this;
Her lips like soft Persuasion's swell,
Pouting and challenging the kiss.

Beneath her chin where dimples play,
About her neck of Parian stone,
Let all the loves and graces stray;
That happy spot is all their own.

At the end of Michaelmas Term, 1804, he was admitted to the Bar, Charles Christopher Pepys being called on the same day. For an hour the currents of their destiny just touched, and then diverged as though they were never like to mingle. Except the uniform of learning which they then put on, they had as little in common as any two young men of the time. The one had fixed his thoughts on Equity, the ambitious dreams of the other led him to prefer Common Law. The one was by art a pleader, and by nature a plodder; unattractive in person, ineloquent in speech, unacquainted with the accomplishments or arts of society; but doggedly determined to know all that was to be known in his calling, and to allow nothing to divert him from its pursuit. The other, versatile and brilliant, of noble presence, and with a thorough air of fashion, was willing (or thought he was) to undergo the drudgery of sitting in court, and reading text-books, and copying forms, and trying to forget for so many hours a day all that made life enjoyable, for the chance of some day making a hit in a speech to a jury, and thereby getting into the golden groove of *nisi prius* gain; or, after a certain time, being held qualified for some easy post, which the blandishments and banquets of Melbourne House might secure for him. He had already chambers at No. 4, Pump Court, Temple, where his name is entered in the Law List "of the Northern Circuit, Special Pleader." As casual acquaintances, Pepys and Lamb met now and then, just often enough to be kept in mind of one another's existence, and to feel, if they felt at all, how little they had to say to each other. The equity draftsman had no taste for politics, rarely went to Levée, and never had time to read the *Morning Post*; and his companion for the Call Day had probably never the curiosity, during the next thirty years, to look at the pages wherein the deeds and arguments of Mr. Pepys, and all that he said to Lord Eldon and Sir Lancelot Shadwell—are they not written in the books of Vesey junior? How, at the end of the long interval, they once more drifted notably into contact, and became firmly bound to each other by the ties of mutual confidence, the sequel will disclose.

Part of the family wealth had come from the elder Peniston of Lincoln's Inn, whose life had been devoted to equity pleading. But his grand-nephew can hardly have been swayed in choosing a profession by the repute of an old gentleman who was dead many years before he was born. His studies at Glasgow, and still more the ambition to excel in argumentative fence which his practice in what has been called the Wrangle School of the University had kindled, were more likely to predispose him at two-and-twenty to saunter five days in each term from St. James's to Temple Bar, and dine off pewter in Lincoln's Inn Hall with noisy and needy comrades of his own time of life. Then as now, there was at the Bar a sprinkling of younger sons, in whom had been instilled the prudent notion that if they were not to drop behind the rank in which they had been bred, they must make their way in diplomacy, the Church, or the law. There had been already mitres in the family; and as episcopal preferments were then

dispensed, holy orders might have seemed to one of epicurean temperament the shortest path to competence and luxury. It was the heyday of ecclesiastical jobbing ; deaneries and golden stalls were the recognized perquisites which courtiers and politicians appropriated according to their need or greed. Bishoprics were the rarer prizes in the game ; but a parliamentary family of distinction might secure, at least, a spiritual peerage in the Irish establishment. Many houses with vast estates in land were thus founded ; and nobody in good society thought the method scandalous or even questionable. For William Lamb, with all his early love of ease and enjoyment, there seemed, however, no fascination in this sort of solemn farce for life ; and Lord Egremont, though withheld by no scruple of conscience on the subject, told him it was a pity that one who had so much promise in him should be thrown away in squabbling about tithe of agistment or cribbing a fortune out of Church lands by running his life against leases. He would have him put on wig and gown, rather than scarf and stole ; use his brain and tongue like Murray or Erskine ; go into Parliament, and in due time all the rest would come. His mother, when she had time to think, thought so too ; she was very proud of her son, and would have done anything to kindle in him the fire of ambition. He did read some law during his student days ; more history perhaps than law. How these years glided by he was never able distinctly to recall ; but amid the distractions and delights of Devonshire House and Petworth, Whitehall and Kensington, there was much to keep alive the hope and purpose of a career. There were gathered all the wit and talent of the day ; old Sheridan and young Canning, fastidious Windham and sardonic Francis, Monk Lewis with his spectre tales, and Gilbert Elliot with his reminiscences of Burke ; Hookham Frere and Lord Henry Petty, Whitbread and General Fitzpatrick, Charles Fox and Lord Grey. There was another mansion out of town, where most of these celebrities were welcome, and where he began to feel himself a favourite. Frederick, third Earl of Besborough had a villa at Roehampton. By his first wife, Henrietta, sister of the Duchess of Devonshire, he had four sons and an only daughter, Caroline, then in her nineteenth year. Brought up chiefly by her grandmother, Lady Spencer, she possessed many attainments then unusual in one so young, and a peculiar charm of manner that more than compensated for the want in some degree of other attractions. In person she was slight and graceful, but of somewhat less than the ordinary height ; her features, small and regular, were not set off by any beauty of complexion ; only her dark eyes, which contrasted strikingly with her golden hair, vindicated her claim to be reckoned among the distinguished and prepossessing.

Some years of her childhood were spent in Italy with her mother, then an invalid. Subsequently she was sent to Devonshire House, and for a while was brought up with her youthful cousins. Her account of life in the nursery is curious. The children saw little of their parents ; were served on silver in the morning and allowed to

carry their plates to the kitchen in quest of the dainties they longed for. Their state of ignorance was profound. They imagined all people were either nobles or paupers, and that for the rich there was no end of money.

"We had no idea that bread or butter was made ; how it came we did not pause to think ; but had no doubt that fine horses must be fed on beef. At ten years old I could not write. My kind aunt Devonshire had taken me when my mother's ill health prevented my being at home. My cousin Hartington loved me better than himself, and every one paid me the compliments shown to children likely to die. I wrote not, spelt not, but I made verses which they all thought beautiful. For myself, I preferred washing a dog, or polishing a piece of Derbyshire spar, or breaking in a horse if they would let me. At ten years old I was taken to my godmother, Lady Spencer's, where the housekeeper, in hoop and ruffles, reigned over seventy servants, and attended the ladies in the drawing-room. All my childhood I was a trouble, not a pleasure ; and my temper was so wayward that Lady Spencer got Dr. Warren to examine me. He said I was neither to learn anything nor see any one for fear the violent passions and strong whims found in me should lead to madness ; of which, however, he said there were as yet no symptoms. I differ ; my instinct was for music ; in it I delighted ; I cried when it was pathetic, and did all that Dryden made Alexander do. But of course I was not allowed to follow it up. The severity of my governess, and the over-indulgence of my parents, spoiled my temper ; and the end was that until I was fifteen I learned nothing."¹

As Lady Caroline grew up she evinced great facility in the acquisition of languages ; and, not content with French and Italian, voluntarily endured the drudgery of learning Greek and Latin, till at length she was able to enjoy not only a classic play at Harrow, where her brothers spent their school days, but was not afraid to undertake herself the recital of an ode of Sappho. Full of romance in all her tastes, she loved painting ; and devoted to water-colour drawing long mornings throughout every period of her life. She had besides that most rare of graphic gifts, the instinct of caricature, which she indulged, not always circumspectly, but never spitefully, in a letter to a friend, or on the fly-leaf of a favourite volume, or wherever else opportunity served and fantastic impulse prompted. She dressed as she painted and played, picturesquely ; prematurely indifferent to opinion ; and never exactly in accordance with the mode. Above all she was, as Lamb too soon found out, like nobody else in conversation. She had no patience, as she said, with the preliminaries ; and skipped all the prefatory matter conventionally deemed indispensable, about coming and not coming, health and the weather, which bored her to extinction. To any one she liked she gave her hand at a second or third interview, without the least unmaidenly air of freedom ; and with any one she did not

¹ Letters to Lady Morgan, 'Memoirs,' vol. ii.

fancy she would not shake hands at all. Very early her pointed and often puzzling questions attracted the notice and fixed the gaze of accomplished visitors at Roehampton and St. James's Place, where she delighted to be present at one of her aunt's receptions. She is one of the few young persons of quality mentioned in letters at the time as remarkable for talent or originality; yet it could hardly be said that her sparkling talk, though it held in solution an abundance of oddity, quaintness, and humour, often crystallised into wit. William Lamb found her irresistibly fascinating, and this perhaps would not have mattered if she had not found him better worth talking to, quicker to catch her meaning, and, in short, more delightful than anybody she had ever seen. The family took no special heed of the growing intimacy; with her connections and accomplishments, a second son having naught but his allowance and his profession was simply not worth thinking about. Good looks and good society might get him a rich wife, if he must marry early; but who cared? that was his own affair. Lady Caroline had the ideas of a duchess, and without much fortune would of course make an excellent match by-and-by. For the present it was natural that the young people should amuse themselves in each other's society; they were very much in the same set, and the time passed happily when they were together. Did Lady Melbourne observe nothing of this, or ruminate, when alone, on possible contingencies?

Meanwhile Lamb lost no time in joining the Bar at the Lancashire Sessions. At the instance of Scarlett, who was much taken with him, a solicitor at Salford sent him a guinea brief: long afterwards he used to say that the moment of greatest pleasure he remembered in life was that in which he saw his name inscribed above the unexpected retainer. He had fortunately little to do in the case; but he got through it without making any mistake; and thenceforth felt that he was really a member of the profession—the profession which, with its many faults and foibles, has after all done more than any other class or calling to shape the civil history of England, and to mould the curious fabric of our social and political order. The die was cast; he had done his first stroke of work, and he felt seven years older for it in willingness to work and in determination. No second brief was left at his lodgings; and during the remainder of the sessions he occupied himself in watching how others did the business, and trying to understand the strange dialect of the provincial witnesses, and the equally unintelligible gibberish of legal phraseology, used in a sort of oral shorthand. At mess he was voted a decided acquisition. Natural, outspoken, well-informed, joyous, shrewd and comical, he promised to be a positive blessing to the sessional circuit, whose chief hardship did not consist in having to put up with bad cooking or indifferent beds, but in having to endure, through long successive evenings, close confinement in dull country towns. Would he really come to sessions regularly? Certainly he would; he had quite made up his mind, and he would be there without fail next time. In this promise he

was quite sincere, but fate did not mean it to be kept. He came no more.

Family residences acquire a social climate of their own, not to be resisted in its influence by a susceptible nature born and bred therein; and never to be wholly forgotten even by the exceptional one whose idiosyncrasy would fain break out of the atmosphere. The climate of the house in Whitehall was courtly. The windows of the living-rooms looked across the park towards St. James's, whence by reflection not a little of its claim to distinction was derived. The new wealth of the Lambs had supplied the beautiful and ambitious daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke with the means of spreading the gilded nets of fashion; and within her subtle toils a rare succession of the gaily plumaged and idly chattering birds were to be seen, caught for a little while and then let go. But Lady Melbourne was not a woman to be satisfied with a show of brilliant equipages, or the celebrity of sumptuous banquets over which the guests lingered until dawn. Her husband had been made an Irish peer, and a Lord-in-waiting, if not to his Majesty, to his most gracious son, who should be King hereafter. Farther on the baron's coronet had been exchanged for that of a viscount, why not a seat in the Lower House for one in the Upper, and an Irish be transfigured into a British peer? All this she accomplished by the arts of courtiership, and by those of fascination over clever men and high-born dames, epicures of quality, poets of renown, statesmen of note, and Princes of the Blood. Tradition has not preserved any evidences of her possessing wit, but Sir Joshua and Maria Cosway give us a vivid notion of her beauty; and that she possessed the spirit and the grace, the tact of society, and the instinct of *savoir-faire*, cannot be doubted. What sacrifices her indolent and undemonstrative mate had silently to endure, by what regrets his hours of solitude were haunted, by what jealousies his dreams were troubled, who will ever know? The only child in whom he seemed to take affectionate interest was Peniston, born to him in 1770, and while he lived the chief object of his pride and care. He appears to have transmitted something of his own passive character to his heir, who in boyhood was obedient, gentle, and polite, in adolescence studious, decorous, and fond. Arrived at man's estate, he became at once a court card in his mother's hand. That he might have a seat in Parliament, his father in 1793, as we have seen, made way for him at Newport; and subsequently he was, by a skilful combination of influences, returned for Hertfordshire. This distinction he did not long enjoy. Attacked suddenly by illness for which the physicians were unable to account, his constitution, never robust, rapidly gave way; and on the 24th of January, 1805, he expired in his thirty-fifth year. By this so unexpected event William Lamb became heir to the titles and estates of the family, and thence must be dated the beginning of his long and distinguished career.

The death of Peniston stilled in Lord Melbourne's lonely bosom whatever fitful echoes may have been wakened there by the aspirations

of his wife. William, in every respect unlike his elder brother, had always been her favourite son ; and in his noble features, quick perception, fine person, and audacious humour, he was the very realisation of all her cherished hopes, the darling object of her solicitude and love. But all her powers of suasion failed to place him in the position Peniston had occupied. It is said that, failing to procure for him the allowance of £5000 a year his elder had enjoyed, she induced a friend to remonstrate with Lord Melbourne on the subject, and to enlist, if possible, his interest for him who had become his heir. All was in vain, William must do with £2000, which was quite enough for him ; he owned that he was very good-looking, lively, and clever in a certain way, but he could never be to him the son whom he had lost. He did not object to paying the requisite smart-money in order that the family might still be represented in Parliament, and accordingly a seat was secured at Leominster for him, who now abandoned all thoughts of following the profession of the law, and thenceforth devoted his attention to public affairs.

The days of mourning for her first-born were ended, and Lady Melbourne did not affect to conceal the hope and joy with which she looked confidently into the future of her second son. The prospect opening to him was indeed golden. At six-and-twenty, without drawback or encumbrance, or anxiety of any kind to chill his satisfaction, he was about to marry her whom he had freely chosen, and who had shown her preference for him when he was still a younger son. A seat in Parliament, without the trouble of a contest, and all that was luxurious in town or country life was his, either in possession or in anticipation. It added not a little to his own and his mother's happiness, that about the same time his sister Emily, to whom from childhood and throughout the long continuance of their subsequent lives he was deeply attached, was betrothed to Earl Cowper, one of the richest proprietors in Hertfordshire, and a man whom every one esteemed. The bright days of spring were spent partly at Roehampton and partly at Melbourne, of which he had always brief fits of fondness. He said he had a bath of quiet there which he could never get in London, and but rarely at Bocket: it rested and refreshed his spirits more than any other change he knew. Early in 1805 he became the accepted suitor of Lady Caroline Ponsonby, to the great satisfaction of his mother, who appreciated all the advantages of his adoption into the highest Whig connection in England. Lord Besborough's cousin had married Mr. (afterwards Earl) Grey ; and not less nearly, his family was related to many others of distinction.

Most of Lamb's relatives and friends were members of Brooks's Club, admission to which was regarded as the initiatory rite of Whiggism. One of his sponsors was Mr. Fox, who was favourably impressed by his gay, incisive talk, and who augured well of his design to devote himself to public life.

On the 3rd of June his marriage took place with Lady Caroline, and on the 21st day of July his sister was married to Earl Cowper. Al-

though it was then usual for the season to end with the King's birthday on the 4th of June, people did not go out of town this year so early, and we find mention made of dinner parties which were numerous attended throughout July and August. The Prince of Wales returned from Brighton on the 14th, and dined at Melbourne House, Lord and Lady Holland, Monk Lewis, Lord and Lady Besborough, their daughter and her spouse, and Lord and Lady Cowper being of the party. From the private letters of Lord Minto about this date, it appears that he too had tarried in London all this time :—"I accompanied Lord and Lady Holland to Lord Besborough's at Rochampton yesterday. We had the two Mr. Lambs there, the eldest of whom, having been the second brother, was intended for the law, and appeared to me a remarkably pleasant, clever, and well-informed young man; he is now the eldest son; the other, George, seems merely a good-natured lad. They are very unlike: the eldest puts me in mind of Wyndham; the other has something of the Prince of Wales, only stunted in height, but very like in some points of manner. Lady Caroline Lamb, wife of Mr. William Lamb, and daughter of Lady Besborough, was also there."¹

The following week Whitehall was deserted for Welwyn, and the newly married pair spent the rest of the year between Panshanger and Brocket.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE COMMONS

Contemporaries in Parliament—Huskisson—All the Talents—The Catholic Question—Maiden speech—Plunket—Fall of Grenville—Second vote of censure—Discouraged as a debater—Birth of only son—Copenhagen.

THE news of Austerlitz reached England early in December; and before Christmas the rumour spread that the health of Mr. Pitt was failing fast. Should he be unable to meet Parliament early in the year a change of executive hands would be inevitable; for no one among his followers had weight or influence enough to face the lowering storm. Tidings of Trafalgar came too late to revive the spirit of the sinking minister; and on his decease Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox were called upon to form an administration. For three-and-twenty

¹ Letter from Lord Minto, August 24th, 1805.

years George III. had kept his word not to admit the leader of the Whigs again to office, or any who openly adhered to him. The Prince, on the other hand, continued to profess the utmost friendship for them, politically and personally. He still frequented Brooks's, and if its chiefs did not possess his exclusive confidence, the younger members of the party had no reason to complain that he forgot them in his revels. Lamb and his brothers were frequently commanded to Carlton House, and his Royal Highness was not unfrequently a guest at Whitehall.

How All the Talents came together, what they achieved, and in little more than twelve months how unexpectedly they fell, can be but briefly glanced at here. In the new administration were combined nearly all the persons whom Lamb was accustomed to regard as public guides or private friends. Fox, Windham, and Sheridan, who divided his admiration in Parliament, had for colleagues Lords Erskine, Howick, and Henry Petty, towards all of whom he felt the strongest ties of friendship. His wife's relative was Chancellor of Ireland, the Duke of Bedford Viceroy, and Elliot of Wells, the confidant of Burke in his declining days, was a second time Secretary. For an effective performance the parts were badly cast.

With good but irresolute intentions, Elliot went back to Ireland lamed in reputation by having served in the same capacity under Lord Camden during the evil days of 1798—still too near to be forgotten, too dark to be forgiven. We know now that he deplored and deprecated many of the atrocities of that shameful time, but the people justly associated him with a system in which he had been something more than a passive accomplice. His look and figure were as unlucky as the associations revived by his name. Solemn in feature and spare in person, the thinnest and palest man in Parliament, they will be sure to call him, said Fitzpatrick, the "Castle Spectre," and exclaim whenever he moves, "See where it comes again!"¹ Plunket and Bush were indeed made law officers of the Crown, but Curran by some unexplained infatuation was passed over, though he was by far the most popular man of the day; and he avenged himself by incessant jokes at the expense of the new officials, in one of which he affected to have learned by accident that the Chief Secretary had left testamentary directions that if he died in Ireland, to elude detection in the grave, his body should be buried in the barrel of a duck-gun.

Lords Holland and Besborough urged on Mr. Fox the folly of leaving such a man as Curran to chafe at neglect and injustice; for he had risked and sacrificed for the principles which the party professed to hold dear infinitely more than most of those who were then enjoying office: and his courage in bearding the ruthless partiality of the judicial bench had endeared him to an outlawed people. The just and generous heart of Fox sympathised with the outspoken discontent of Curran, and he told the Duke of Bedford that the error must be

¹ Lord Holland's 'Memoirs of the Whig Party.'

repaired. His Grace availed himself of the first opportunity, and by midsummer Curran was appointed Master of the Rolls.¹

On taking his seat in the Commons, Lamb found himself surrounded by not a few friends and relatives new like himself to the duties and responsibilities of Parliament. Lord Althorp, lately returned for Okehampton, was a Junior Lord of the Treasury; but, fonder of hunting than politics, he was seldom to be seen in the House except on the eve of a party division. Lord Duncannon attended better, though hardly yet evincing the aptitude for public business that eventually distinguished him. On the other side, close to Mr. Canning, sat the member for Liskeard, who by marriage had lately become a near connection of his own.

William Huskisson, the son of a Staffordshire squire, Lamb's senior by several years, had entered political life as secretary to Lord Gower when Minister at Paris; and by his aptitude for official work he had won his way to advancement. Soon after, he was named by Dundas to superintend the working of the Alien Act; this duty he discharged so well that at twenty-six he became Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and in that department gained much of the knowledge of external trade which subsequently made him an authority without rival in debate. In 1799 he married the daughter of Admiral Milbanke, uncle of Lady Melbourne, an officer who had seen much service and had earned the commendations of Lord Spencer when he presided at the Admiralty. Mrs. Huskisson was a favourite at Melbourne House; her husband, an amiable but formal man, with a certain air of *mauvais honte*, was little qualified to mingle in the frivolities and revels there. It was not until the previous year that he had succeeded in obtaining a seat in Parliament: his opponent at Liskeard being Thomas Sheridan, with whom he had an equal number of votes at the poll, but whom as competitor he got rid of on petition, to the no small regret of William Lamb, who thought the latter far the better fellow of the two. During the brief term of Mr. Pitt's second administration Huskisson was Secretary of the Treasury; and he now prepared to maintain his reputation as a rising financier by sifting the estimates and criticising the Budget of Lord Henry Petty, whose inexperience in details gave him no ordinary advantage. Lamb understood little of the questions that arose in debate between them; but his sympathies were all with the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he had nothing in common, either of tastes, habits, or prejudices with the clever but ill-assured man of calculations. Huskisson was then just six-and-thirty, but in countenance and bearing he looked considerably older. From some constitutional want of bodily vigour, or a strange fatality which clung to him through life, too many of his days were spent in the endurance of pain. In childhood he had suffered much from a broken arm; a day or two before his marriage his horse fell with him,

¹ The appointment is dated 23th June, 1806; it was vacated by resignation on the 22nd of February, 1814.

and though he would not confess it at the time, he was hurt severely. Not long afterwards, when crossing the entrance to the Horse Guards, he was knocked down by the pole of a carriage ; and in 1801, while staying at Blair Athol, he dislocated his ankle in attempting to follow the example of others who undertook to leap the Moat : and being unskilfully treated, he was never afterwards free from a slight degree of lameness. Untiring in the acquisition of knowledge, conscientious in the use he made of it, and perspicuous and fluent in discussion, a high value was set on his aid by the leaders of his party ; but he was not endowed with qualities calculated to win any especial favour in society : and for a time he and Lamb saw little of each other.

The Whig leader in the Commons succeeded, when the new administration was formed, in dissuading the Catholic leaders from presenting their petition during the session. If they did so he would as usual support it with all his power ; but he warned them that if beaten, the Government would be broken up, and another formed bent on their absolute exclusion. Instead of risking what might prove an abortive effort to grasp all that they desired, he promised that measures should be brought forward to secure the Catholics in substance what they had then only in words—a right to equal promotion in the army, and to hold municipal offices ; a revision of the local magistracy, and a bill for the commutation of tithes : “The effect of these measures would be partly to make the Catholics generally more contented, partly to enable them to come with additional weight and strength when they again asserted their claims.”¹ After the death of Fox the popular party in Ireland sought by various means to ascertain when the partial concessions which had been promised by him were likely to be forthcoming. The Lord Lieutenant was mute, the Secretary inarticulate, and the Chancellor, who made but an indifferent judge, was too lofty to be audible. The removal of corrupt and oppressive magistrates lay with him, and this part of the promise of Mr. Fox, which needed no new statute, was not performed owing, it was suspected, to Mr. Ponsonby's fear of endangering his family influence in certain constituencies. One attempt he did make to break down the fence of sectarian exclusion wherewith every seat even of local judgment was girt round. By the terms of Grattan's Relief Act, which Pitt's administration, at the outbreak of war with revolutionary France, allowed to pass in 1793, Roman Catholics were admitted to the elective franchise, and such subordinate offices as were not excepted therein. They might not aspire to any then existing rank or dignity of the law, but the newly created function of salaried Chairman of Quarter Sessions was plainly not within the mischief of these reservations. Mr. Bellew, a gentleman of character and standing at the Bar, was named by the Chancellor to act as assessor to the magistrates of Galway, and recommended by him as well fitted to be their chairman. It was hoped that his being the son of a baronet of

¹ Letter to Mr. Ryan, 1806.

old descent would extenuate the sin of his professing the ancient creed ; but the justices were highly offended, and to all expostulations proved inexorable. The heart of the Government failed, and Mr. Bellew was persuaded to relinquish this invidious post for a pension of £400 a year. Foxhunting intolerance was left to blunder on undisturbed for twenty years more, and the community at large paid the annual fine for Mr. Ponsonby's abortive attempt to steal a morsel of right in a courthouse.

Grattan vehemently urged in private the policy and humanity of reforming the unequal and ruinous tithe system, which he described as a perennial source of distrust, oppression, and crime. Plunket, who drank out of the same cup with him, earnestly pleaded for some such measure. The moderate party out of doors, through Lord Fingall, offered to exert all their influence to postpone the agitation of the general question, if this indispensable measure, and one admitting Catholic officers in the army to the higher grades of rank and command, were carried without delay. The democratic majority disparaged these instalments, and foretold, if they did not actually hope for, their defeat. They dreamed not of the powerful ally who was secretly preparing to aid them, and to sow tares while ministers slept, in the field of gradual reform. That ally was no other than the King.

The new member for Leominster heard these and other subjects connected with Ireland freely and frequently discussed at Holland House and Roehampton ; and the impressions then left upon his mind remained indelible. He then first learned the difficult but important lesson which he was destined subsequently to apply, with a thoroughness none had ventured to do before him, to retrieve the imperial blunder of provincial oppression, and to win back to healthful content the temper of a community poisoned by wrong, and that it were mere folly and impotence to affect the pedantic observance of rules ordinarily recognised in the administration of a country long accustomed to the equal treatment of every class and creed. He knew, as yet, little or nothing of the island with the government of which he was subsequently to be occupied and identified more than any minister of his time ; but even to his inexperience the question irresistibly suggested itself—why not govern through the men whom the majority trust and honour, instead of by those who are generally hated or feared ? And he learned likewise the yet more important principle in the policy of concession, that it is never worth while, where a great evil is confessed and a great want admitted, to attempt remedies by halves. The inducement held out by Fox to the Catholic leaders, that the instalment he contemplated was one which would enable them to exact the rest, was of all others, calculated to alarm the fears of ascendancy and inflame its antagonism ; or if not, and if in full view of future demands unsatisfying concessions should be granted, why not offer to pay at once the debt of justice in full ? To fritter away the credit of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver was not more objectionable than needlessly to keep up agitation after

the main point in dispute had been yielded. It will be found that, when Lamb came himself to deal with measures involving the same choice of difficulties, he preferred the manlier and simpler course, and found therein the satisfaction of success ; until on the occasion of the very last legislative measure to which he was a party, by the surrender of his own judgment as to the inexpediency of stopping short halfway, he was finally overthrown.

Meanwhile the session was suffered to pass without a debate on the general question of religious disabilities ; and the partial relaxations promised as payments on account were deferred to a more convenient season.

The death of Fox irreparably shook the credit and influence of the ministry. The portfolio of foreign affairs was given to Lord Howick ; and the leadership of the Commons was likewise entrusted to him. Thoroughly conversant with the ideas and intentions of his distinguished predecessor, and having the entire confidence of Lord Grenville, he continued to pursue a policy unchanged with respect to the conduct of the war. His coldness, and inapproachability by the rank and file, strikingly contrasted with the affable and communicative manner of him who was gone, and tended, no doubt, to lessen the authority which his acknowledged talents and integrity were calculated to give him. But he possessed qualities of guidance and control that won respect from those who neither loved his politics nor his person. Speaker Abbot, when asked who of all the leaders he had known did best the business at the table, said : " Beyond all doubt, Lord Howick : even Pitt, though he had a great majority, and could accomplish marvels when he chose to exert his power of speaking, was neither so clear or so decided in the conduct of details ; and of course Addington was not to be compared with either. But when Howick stated what he meant to do regarding a particular measure or motion, I knew exactly what to expect, and that he would suffer no departure from his word." But the place so long occupied by Fox in the bosom of his friends and followers no one could supply. He was perhaps the only parliamentary chief whose ascendancy had been originally gained, and when lost through political dissension had been regained by the force of personal attachment. Other party leaders have commanded larger majorities and carried more great measures, but none before or since was ever so beloved, nor was the loss of any ever so lamented. Lamb had in childhood sat at his feet, and in youth hung upon his genial talk, and learned when he came to man's estate to regard him with sentiments of party loyalty which he could never feel for any other man. Upon the pedestal of Fox's bust he wrote the following lines :—

Live, marble, live ! for thine's a sacred trust,
 The patriot's name that speaks a noble mind ;
 Live, that our sons may stand before thy bust,
 And hail the benefactor of mankind !

This was the man who, midst the tempest's rage,
 A mark of safety to the nation stood ;
 Warned with prophetic voice a servile age,
 And strove to quench the ruthless thirst for blood.

This was the man, whose ever deathless name
 Recalls his generous life's illustrious scenes ;
 To bless his fellow-creatures was his aim—
 And universal liberty his means !

On the 19th of December, 1806, Lamb moved the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. The renewal of exertions to resist the continual aggression of France had been rendered indispensable by the rejection of all terms of accommodation ; and though we had but two allies left in Europe, he hoped and believed that the spirit of the country would not repine at the burthens and sacrifices that would be necessary to maintain our attitude of national resistance. The internal condition of the realm was prosperous and tranquil ; all classes were contented, and our commerce flourished.

Mr. Canning moved, as an amendment, an elaborate counter-address, effusive in profession of devotion to the Sovereign, and boastful of the courage and loyalty of the people, and pledging Parliament to greater efforts by sea and land to make good successes recently gained "notwithstanding the apparent inactivity of ministers," and their tardy and recalcitrant negotiations abroad. Howick denounced the amendment and speech as unwarranted by fact, and as more fitting a charge of impeachment. Castlereagh defended Canning, but was glad the amendment was not to be pressed.

The Talents then sought to strengthen themselves in debate, especially on the Catholic question. Ponsonby and Grattan urged the pre-eminent worth of the aid in this respect which Plunket could afford. He was personally unknown among the Scotch and English Whigs ; but his forensic reputation stood already high, and his old leaders in the Irish Parliament recalled with enthusiasm the courage and vigour of his denunciations of the means employed to carry the Union. At the beginning of 1807, at the special request of Grenville, he consented to come into Parliament for the close borough of Midhurst. He was not long in redeeming the promise of his friends ; and on an early occasion made a speech which Whitbread declared would never be forgotten. No intelligible report remains, and he himself did not think it worth preserving. His unwillingness at all times to take the trouble of reproducing from memory what he had spoken was almost insuperable ; and the minute preparation of sentences and phrases beforehand was a labour he could seldom bring himself to undergo. On the logical ground-plan and the well-proportioned pillars of his argument he grudged no thought or care ; for his mind became thoroughly charged with any great cause he espoused ; and all its powers were given cheerfully and unstintingly to the development in due order, in the marshalling in fit procession,

resources of reasoning, sarcasm, illustration, and invective. Rhetorical vanity he had none ; and though in his rich wardrobe of words the variety seemed inexhaustible, scarcely anything that could be termed a decoration was to be found. This was his only speech of any importance during the two months he sat for Midhurst ; for after the dissolution in May he did not offer himself again. He remained out of Parliament for five ensuing years. Lamb was among the most attentive of his hearers on the occasion referred to, and among the most anxious of those who longed to hear him again ; for Plunket, if he failed to dazzle and charm him like Canning, swayed his judgment in Irish affairs even more. He preferred his masculinity of thought and style to the whimsicality and sometimes extravagance of Grattan ; Plunket, he said, came nearer to his ideal of Demosthenes.

When the purport of the Catholic Officers Bill was explained by Howick to the King he raised no objection ; and notice thereupon was given for the introduction of the measure. It was received in Ireland with general indifference, provoking no anger, and eliciting no thanks.

In his confidential correspondence the Duke of Bedford furnished the Home Secretary, for the information of the Cabinet, with a careful account of the various meetings of Catholics in Dublin during the spring, and of several interviews given by him to Catholic peers, and by Mr. Elliot to deputations of landed proprietors and merchants, at which this proposal of limited concession, and the expediency of petitioning for general relief from disabilities, were discussed. Lords Fingall, Ffrench and Gormanston, Sir Edward Bellew, Mr. Keogh, and Mr. Burke, are with others mentioned as persons of influence and weight ; but no allusion is made, by name or otherwise, to Mr. O'Connell. Up to this time, and for some years later, Mr. Keogh performed somewhat languidly and condescendingly the part of leader. As a man of property and intelligence, he was uniformly treated with respect ; but in meetings said to have varied from fifty persons to two hundred, there was not much room for the exercise of stimulating rhetoric ; and the drenching showers of caution which fell upon their deliberations whenever the wind blew from the east and the mail-bags were delivered from London were not propitious to ignition when any sparks did fall. In general the measure for equalising the condition of Catholic officers in the army was regarded with silent indifference. At a public meeting Lord Fingall moved to defer any general petition for relief, lest it should impede the measure and embarrass Government ; neither reason was thought of sufficient weight, but the former was hardly thought worth noticing.¹ While ministers were confidentially assuring George III. "that they could not look without great uneasiness and apprehension at the state of Ireland, which they considered the only vulnerable part of the British Empire,"² and

¹ Duke of Bedford to Lord Spencer, Feb. 17th, 1807.

² Cabinet Minute, March 15th, 1807.

warning him that the situation of that country appeared to them "to constitute the most formidable part of the existing difficulties"¹ of the realm, the surface of discontent remained unruffled by a passing gust of complaint. It was the sullen torpor of despondency, generated by the memory, still fresh, of the horrors and miseries of ineffectual resistance, and by a hardening unbelief in hopes and promises of redress. The Whigs had been twelve months in office, and nothing had been done even through the medium of legislation. To the bulk of the community the obstacles that hindered them were utterly unknown; and save to a very few persons who had opportunities of private communication with members of the Government, their silence seemed, and could not but seem, evidence of insincerity. Even Moore, the especial favourite of their *salons*, could not refrain from blended ridicule and reproach:—

As bees on flowers alighting cease to hum,
So settling upon places Whigs grow dumb.

With their apology before us, from the pen of one of the most candid and consistent amongst them, we may judge the Grenville Cabinet more leniently, though he himself admits their conduct on the whole was indefensible.

George III. believed that he might with impunity reject their half-hearted counsel, backed as it was by no popular demand; and before the bill came on for second reading he informed his ministers that it went beyond what he could conscientiously yield. He had misunderstood, he said, the scope of the measure, and required that it should be withdrawn. Lord Grenville, the Chancellor, the Duke of Portland, the Chief Justice, and Lord Spencer were for compliance, and sooner than break up the Government their colleagues acquiesced. The King, having thus humiliated them, demanded a pledge that under no circumstances should he be disturbed by such a proposition again. This was too much, and they all forthwith resigned.

Lord Holland owned to Lamb, to whom he talked freely, that he was adverse to their withdrawal of the bill; but being the youngest and most inexperienced member of the Cabinet, he thought it hopeless to resist. He believed that if the Duke of Bedford and Lord Spencer, who were primarily responsible, as Viceroy and Home Secretary, for the pledges given by Fox, had tendered their resignation in the first instance, they might have caused a schism among their friends; but public opinion would have done them justice, and public faith would have revived. The concession offered was confessedly the minimum of redress, for sake of which they hoped that all the rest would be allowed to stand adjourned *sine die*; yet that minimum they consented to abandon in a vain attempt to appease the crazy prejudices of the Sovereign. Their submission, contrary to their conviction of what

¹ Ibid., March 18th, 1807.

was intrinsically right, and what they had declared requisite for the safety of the realm, could not have been justified had it stood alone.

"The surrender of our opinions"—wrote Lord Holland some years afterwards—"was, as I then thought and still think, quite wrong. It might in many cases prove as injudicious in policy as it was indefensible in principle. . . . The impatience of the King to get rid of us spared us the embarrassment, and gave to our blunder all the effect and advantage of an act of dexterity. He put himself completely in the wrong, and relieved us from a situation from which it had otherwise been difficult to extricate ourselves with honour."¹

On the formation of Mr. Perceval's Cabinet of resistance to all concession, Mr. Brand moved, "That it is contrary to the first duty of the confidential servants of the Crown to restrain themselves by any pledge, expressed or implied, from offering to the King any advice which the course of circumstances may render necessary for the welfare and security of any part of his Majesty's extensive empire."

Lamb seconded the motion in a careful speech. It reads like a fragment of one of the many constitutional pamphlets which lie thick in Hansard, and which can only be accounted for, in their mutilated state, by imperfect reporting, or by the failure of their authors to catch or to keep the ear of the House. The instinct of that assembly has been ever quick to discern when a gentleman meditates inflicting on it a dissertation upon the general aspects of a subject about which he has probably nothing original to say. It may be that all he has written down and got by heart is good enough for himself, as an exercise of mind, or as evidence *quantum valeat* that he has something in him, or, if by good luck it is given in the journals next day, as redeeming a hustings pledge to make himself heard at St. Stephen's. But prize essays of the sort are not thought good for them by the bulk of the House of Commons. A witty or bitter attack is worth hearing; a humorous or even a ludicrous defence is worth staying for, but a set disquisition, philosophic, pretentious, or vague, is upon the whole better not heard, for it tends simply to generate a low fever of impatience, a sense of headache, and eventually an ungracious cry of "Divide." The more faultless the exercise the worse for its author's chance of getting it listened to, because the less chance of interjection or interruption breaking the reproachful silence which gravely warns to desist those who are not wanted. What is surprising is that so many clever men at their wits' end for an occasion to talk should fall into the error, and only discover their mistake when, after certain preliminary platitudes, the chill of a general thaw comes over them, and they perceive friends and foes gently melting away through the side doors; there is nothing for it then but to break off with a well-turned declaration that everything has been said already that needs to be said, and that the case is incontestable. A quaint quotation from Lord Coke nods threateningly over the field of view. "The

1 'Memoirs of the Whig Party,' vol. ii. p. 202.

great Keeper of the Seal," it is said, "maintained that the councillors of the King ought to leave simulation and dissimulation at the porter's lodge when they came to council." This notion, when worked out and applied to the outgoing and the incoming ministry in phrases trenchant and terse, might have been made to tell on the sensibilities of those who had lost and those who had won; but the working-out and the application do not appear—possibly never were uttered, though we may take for granted that they were all to be found clearly written in the pigeon-hole of some *escritoire* at Melbourne House.

"The constitution of this realm required that the King in exercising the functions of government should take the advice of the two great councils of the nation, the Houses of Lords and Commons. But the slow progress as well as publicity of their deliberations would in many instances destroy that secrecy and interfere with that promptitude and despatch so often necessary to the success of the measures of the Government. It had been adopted as a principle coeval with the constitution that the right and duty of both Houses to advise the Sovereign might be deputed to a selection from the members of both Houses, by whose advice every act of the Government was supposed to be guided; and thus, as far as was possible in a human institution, to give to the free government of England all the advantages of secrecy and despatch which belong to an arbitrary Monarchy. But what surety did the country possess that this duty would be uniformly performed by men who could restrain themselves by a pledge to withhold their advice from his Majesty upon any occasion, however important or indispensable? What security had the country against such men giving their Sovereign the worst advice; or how could the people be secure of their liberties under the government of men who, for the sake of possessing power, could violate their duty to their Sovereign, break their oaths as privy councillors and sink their responsibility as ministers? If such a doctrine as that of the pledge required were to be allowed to pass or to be sanctioned, the constitution would be at an end. Ministers might be men of rank and talent, but by signing such a pledge they would resign their duty as honest councillors of the Crown; and if the House were to sit silent on such a question, it would abandon that constitution which was its pride, its duty, and its glory to maintain, to preserve, and to defend."

Plunket in a long and able speech contended that the motion meant no reflection on the King; but those who had recently advised him had done a double injury, first in inducing his Majesty to believe that he was acting contrary to the interests of his people, and next in persuading him to demand an unconstitutional pledge.

Grattan supported the resolution as did Sir S. Romilly, Whitbread and Howick. But on a division it was defeated by 258 to 226, after two nights' debate. Mr. Brand was complimented on the moderation and discretion of the motion, but no notice appears to have been taken of Lamb.

His only son was born on the 11th of August, 1807, and was named

by the Prince of Wales, as sponsor at his baptism, George Augustus Frederick. Of the many hopes encircling his infancy none were destined to be realised. Miss Berry notes in her diary, the following May, with what maternal pride Lady Caroline took her to a room at the top of the house at Whitehall to see her little boy asleep, who then promised well, only that he seemed too big for his age. Next day he was seized with fits, which it was thought would prove fatal. Life unhappily was preserved, but only to himself to prove a burthen, and to his father a grief incurable.

The seizure of the Danish fleet at Copenhagen without a previous declaration of war, because they were not placed at the disposition of the British Admiral, led to prolonged and animated debate. Lamb voted with his party, but his confidence in their power to achieve anything was daunted; and his belief in his own capacity for debate waxed so cold that he did not make any attempt to speak during the session. His attendance, like that of Althorp, at this period was desultory and broken by many intervals devoted to pleasure; but he was generally ready to be in his place when the elders whom he trusted thought it needful or important. Plunket had disappeared from the scene, not to be lured back by the blandishments of Lord Grenville, or the offer of reappointment as Attorney-General by Lord Redesdale. Ponsonby and Grattan and Newport led Lamb's convictions in Irish affairs; we find him voting with them in favour of increasing the grant to Maynooth from £9,250 to £13,000 a year, to prevent many of the students for the Catholic priesthood being sent abroad for education. In general politics he appears to have usually sided with those with whom he lived. Among them the policy of the new administration was held in as much aversion as its capabilities were treated with disparagement. Canning while he retained office, and after him Lord Wellesley, were indeed exceptions to their disdain; but Perceval and Castlereagh were habitual themes of depreciation; and Lamb had not the vanity, while yet inexperienced in public affairs, to set up for himself as a discernor of spirits. In the daily round of refined and luxurious existence, time glided by. The lot had fallen to him in pleasant places. As yet there was no shadow on his path; and if, contrary to the belief of Holland House, the Tories should last for ever, he was ready to say with Mr. Fox, "that in the company of witty men and pretty women, with plenty of fresh air, old books, and nothing to do, life was very endurable."

Meanwhile the family continued to enjoy the favour of Carlton House, the heir to the throne being present at assemblies given by Lady Caroline and attended by Sheridan and other intimates of the circle, tarrying at supper not unfrequently till break of day.¹

¹ Miss Berry's Journal, vol. ii. p. 346.

CHAPTER V.

VOTES IN OPPOSITION.

Charges against the Duke of York—Abolition of sinecures—Reform of the criminal law—Restrictions on the Regency—A Lord of the Bedchamber—Support of the war—Death of Perceval.

HAD any one told either Lady Spencer or Lady Melbourne, on coming to town early in 1809, that before Easter her son would be found censuring by his vote in Parliament the most affable Prince of the Blood, he would have been deemed a trifler or insane. If any one had told the youthful and idle politicians themselves that such an unwelcome duty lay before them he would assuredly have seemed to them as one that mocked. Had anybody ventured to repeat the prophecy a month later, when sinister rumours had got into circulation of disclosures about to be made of malpractices at the Horse Guards, Althorp in half an hour would have forgotten it at the next meet of the Pytchley Hounds, and Lamb would have answered with an indolent stare or a lazy laugh. Yet so it was to be. A test of the very different metal of which the two were made was about to be applied, unexpectedly and painfully. There is no reason to suppose that at this early period the judgment of either was materially influenced by that of the other; but the coincidence of the views they formed and acted upon under all the circumstances, may be regarded as the first link in the long chain of sympathy that bound them together in public life. To the careless observer they had little in common. Their pursuits and tastes, their ways of life and notions of enjoyment were in all respects the most opposite. It could hardly be said that the political opinions of either were as yet mature, or that as party men their joints were yet firmly knit. But there was in both of them, unprofessed in wordy platitude and hitherto never put to the proof, a genuine love of justice for its own sake, and a fearless independence of character which inevitably begot mutual confidence and respect, and eventually led an ever-widening circle to look to and to trust them.

Lord Althorp had been more than four years in Parliament. His distaste for general society, his unacquaintance with literature and art, his inveterate bashfulness—which imparted a sense of hesitation to his utterance of earnest thoughts, provokingly unlike their clearness and solidity—had precluded his attainment of political influence out of doors, except in his own county, the representation of which he held without a contest from 1806 until he became a peer. For two years he had worked hard at Cambridge to gratify his mother's wish that he should be in the first class, and by dint of self-denial of all his favourite amusements he succeeded in gaining the first place, a very unusual

thing for young patricians in that day, then precluded from even competing for the higher honours of the University. He thus acquired a knowledge of the elementary science of calculation, which fitted into the matter-of-fact texture of his mind and grew with it to maturity. He became a scientific agriculturist and a valuable assistant in public inquiries where the collation of minute facts or the elucidation of complicated figures was involved. For a good while he was too much absorbed in country pursuits to attend regularly at Westminster; but by degrees he took more interest in national affairs, rather for the sake of the practical improvements in legislation he deemed necessary, than from any strong interest in party warfare. The Whigs knew he would always vote straight for what was most liberal; and the reporters knew what he meant to say although he did not always succeed in saying it. When beaten, which was frequently the case, he was never seen to frown, and with an opponent he was just as good-humoured next day as with a defeated friend. His parents were more fond than proud of him, for never had accomplished and ambitious parents a more unambitious or ungraceful son. But they loved his sterling worth, and had implicit confidence that whenever tried he would be found worthy of his name.

Early in the session Colonel Wardle, an almost unknown and wholly un influential member of the ministerial party, gave notice of motion for an inquiry into the misconduct of the Commander-in-Chief, to whom he openly imputed corrupt connivance in the sale by his mistress of commissions and promotions in the army. People asked in wonder if he were in earnest, or what his antecedents were. Mr. Elliot and Lord Castlereagh had unfavourable recollections of him in Ireland, where he commanded a Welsh regiment of Fencibles during the rebellion of 1798, by whom some of the atrocities were committed that excited the indignation of the gallant Abercromby and the grief of the humane Cornwallis. Otherwise his antecedents had been obscure. His seat had been won by the profession of extreme opinions, but having neither education, talent nor fortune, he had no chance of making way with his own side, and was taunted with seeking notoriety by playing up to the cheers of the other. The Whig leaders had no fancy, however, for such a recruit. Ponsonby, Tierney, and Lord Henry Petty gave ministers to understand that they discredited his imputations and regretted their utterance as a public scandal. General Fitzpatrick and Mr. Windham, who enjoyed the personal friendship of his Royal Highness, were more open in their condemnation, and Lord Grey was known to have spoken of the affair as a mean and miserable species of persecution.¹ If Mr. Perceval had met the motion with a summary refusal it is possible that no more would have been heard of the matter, for no man of mark on either side was disposed to have his name associated with accusations which, if not incredible, it is generally supposed would never be substantiated.

¹ Le Marchant's 'Memoir of Viscount Althorp,' ch. vi.

But the Duke had given such personal assurances of their utter groundlessness that the minister was tempted to challenge the accuser to the proof; and for many days the House was occupied in the examination of witnesses at the bar, whose revelations filled Government with dismay and the public with rage and shame. Attempts were then made to break down the value of the evidence, much of which would not have been admitted by a court of law; Romilly and Whitbread felt called on to interpose for the protection of witnesses and the elucidation of the truth; and it became evident that a growing section of ministerialists were getting ashamed of the transaction. Excitement out of doors rapidly waxed warm. On the other hand, all the influence of the Court was brought to the aid of Government, and in a House where so many members had virtually no constituents it was only surprising that a minority of two hundred should have been found steadfastly resisting Mr. Perceval's resolution exonerating the Commander-in-Chief from complicity in corruption. But many grievous charges had not been confuted; Wilberforce and Sir Robert Peel,¹ J. W. Ward, N. Sneyd, and other ministerialists voted with Opposition, and one hundred and fifty members did not vote at all. Next day Perceval informed the House that the Duke had retired from the command of the army, which he had held for fourteen years. Althorp moved that in consequence of his Royal Highness having resigned it was not necessary to proceed further in the matter. This implied censure was rejected by two to one, Lamb, Milton, and Whitbread voting in the minority.

The younger Liberals would have carried their virtual triumph further. Lord Folkestone moved for a committee of general inquiry into the existence of any corrupt practices in the disposal of offices in any department of the State. He was supported by Mr. Whitbread and Lord A. Hamilton, but opposed by Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Tierney, and Lord Henry Petty on constitutional grounds, and by Canning and Perceval on the part of the Government. Only thirty voted for the motion, against one hundred and seventy-eight; but in the minority were Lord Althorp, Lord Forbes, Sir John St. Aubyn, Lyttelton, Pelham, Dudley North, Western, Coke, Ord, Lord Ossulston, and Lamb.²

In the autumn Lord H. Petty was called to the Upper House on the death of his brother; and the Opposition lost in him their most popular and trusted leader. In a private letter Lord Palmerston notices the event with characteristic clearness of appreciation:—"Petty's elevation to the Upper House is a great circumstance for us, not so much from the harm which he would have done us by his individual attacks, as from the unity and vigour the Opposition would have acquired by placing him ostensibly, at least, at their head; a situation for which he

¹ The father of the Statesman.

² Letter from Lord Althorp to his father, April 19th, 1809.

was well qualified, but into which there is not another individual among them whom they can with equal advantage elect.”¹

Hansard contains no record of Lamb in 1808 or 1809; but in 1810 he supported Mr. Fuller’s motion to abolish sinecure places. He charged Perceval, who preceded him in debate, with misrepresenting the aims and motives of his honourable friend, who really sought to purify and not to subvert parliamentary institutions.

His objection to these places was that they had a tendency to introduce into Parliament men who could not be expected to give an unbiassed suffrage in any discussion, and who would at all times be ready to sell their votes for their offices.

“He objected to these offices as not only offering means of venal support to administration, but as also giving birth and strength to a factious opposition to Government—when those who vote and are numbered in the day of battle think they have reason to complain, if they happen to be overlooked in the distribution of the spoil.”²

Though supported by Creedy, Lord Archibald Hamilton, and Whitbread, on an understanding that the subject would be revived when the report was brought up of the Finance Committee the motion was withdrawn.

Romilly found in Lamb a willing convert to the doctrines of merciful wisdom he sought to apply in the reform of the criminal law. Every abatement in the sanguinary catalogue of penalties for offences against property proposed by that gentle and sagacious preacher in the wilderness, had his cordial support. In May, 1810, Romilly snatched a second reading in a thin house for one of what Bentham called his Anti-hanging Bills; but on a subsequent stage the zealots for the scaffold rallied to the rescue; and though Canning, Wilberforce, Brougham, Abercromby, Sir W. Grant, Granville, Sharp, Lamb, and other disciples who loved and trusted him were at their posts, orthodox cruelty succeeded in throwing out the measure by a majority of one.

He likewise supported a motion of his friend Mr. Brand for an inquiry into the state of the national representation, with a view to a juster distribution of electoral power. Ponsonby and Whitbread, Tierney and Newport led a respectable minority in its favour; but Canning and Windham persisted in regarding English reform as but an abridged edition of French revolution; and they were able to lend ministers a decisive majority.

In October Mr. Lamb, accompanied by Lady Caroline, met Lord Palmerston at the house of Mr. Conyers, where there was a shooting party, but the woods were so full of traps and spring guns that the owner “dared not set his foot in any of his plantations lest he should leave it behind him.” He shot better than his friend, who tells, in his own characteristic way, how he brought down but one brace of pheasants owing to the high wind which blew; but Lamb was luckier,

¹ To Lord Malmesbury, November 24th, 1809.

² Hansard, vol. xv. p. 383, February 12th.

and always found the wind lower when he fired, which was a knack he had through life, which stood him in good stead in politics as in sport.¹

Towards the end of the year the illness of the King rendered it necessary that Parliament should make provision for the exercise of the royal authority, and resolutions were submitted to the House having for their object its limitation with regard to making peers and conferring offices for life. Opposition contended, as in 1787, that the Prince of Wales should be unfettered during his regency in the use of the prerogative. Prolonged debates arose on the mode in which Parliament ought to perform its exceptional function. Perceval would have them declare the right and duty of the two Houses to supply the defect in the personal exercise of the sovereign authority. Sir F. Burdett and Lord W. Russell were for acknowledging the Heir Apparent as invested *de jure* with supreme executive power without any abstract declaration by Parliament implying their right to give or to withhold it. William Lamb replied with much animation that such doctrine comported not with sound constitutional principle or usage; and was highly complimented by Mr. Stephen and others on the excellence of his argument.

But when it came to the adoption of the proposed restrictions Government found it difficult to carry their recommendations. Lamb was entrusted by his party with the duty of moving an amendment on the principal resolution for limiting the functions of the Prince Regent. The right honourable gentleman had now opened the plan under which he proposed to commit to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales the government of these realms; and it was for Parliament to decide how far that plan was expedient, or whether it was such as could with propriety be adopted. With respect to those functions derived under the King, but in the exercise of which he had no immediate concern, such as the administration of justice in the courts of law, it was evident that the royal authority had suffered no diminution, and that the powers of the Executive were in their full force and vigour; but where the mind of his Majesty was to be applied, where the personal judgment of the Sovereign had to be called into action, there the Executive was incomplete, and those powers were dead and gone, and dormant to as great an extent as would result even from the demise of the King. The question now, therefore, was whether they would supply those powers in a complete and efficient manner, or in the mode proposed by the right honourable gentleman. With respect to the precedents of 1788, upon which so much had been said, and to which so much authority had been ascribed, he must say that, having never been carried into effect, it wanted the great sanction of all authority, it wanted the sanction which every precedent should have, that of experience. It was in reality no precedent, and he was convinced that, had it been carried into effect at that period, the con-

¹ Letter to his sister, October 29th, 1810.

sequences would have been found to be most injurious to the country. But should any gentlemen, from deference to the characters of the eminent men of the day, and more particularly to that of the distinguished individual with whom it originated, be inclined to look to it with more respect, they would do well to consider the times that had passed over in the interval, and the different circumstances in which the country stood at the two different periods. It was not enough, in describing that difference, to say that we were then in a state of peace and now in a state of war—and here he must beg to remark that there was a reprehensible levity in the right honourable gentleman's manner upon this part of the subject, which he thought but ill accorded with its nature and importance. The country was then not only in a state of peace, but of internal tranquillity and safety ; now it was engaged in foreign war, oppressed with internal dissatisfaction, surrounded with peril and with danger. Such was the situation in which they were called upon to constitute a limited regency ; but let gentlemen put it to their own minds, then, whether, under such circumstances, a proposition of that kind could with propriety be acceded to ; and with respect to the precedent of 1788, so much but so undeservedly relied on, let them reflect, whether, if the limited government then projected had been carried into effect, and his Majesty had not happily recovered, that government would have had force or energy enough to weather the storm of the French Revolution. There might have been, and he had no doubt there were, many persons who believed that the alarms which prevailed in this country during the French Revolution had no solid foundation, and were excited without justifiable cause ; but there were those who believed that there were real grounds for those alarms ; and he would therefore put it to them to say, if they believed that during the period of those alarms we should have been able to weather the storm with the arm of the royal prerogative so palsied and weakened. With respect to external danger at the present moment, he had not words to express his sense of it, and as to domestic danger, though he had not much fear in general of opinions that could be met with other opinions, he was not without his apprehensions. What were called Jacobinical principles in the former instance—the refinements of philosophy and the speculations of theorists which characterised that day, carried a sort of corrective in their own wildness and extravagance ; but the doctrines which were now afloat were much more dangerous, because more specious and more seemingly constitutional. But, after all, why should Parliament entertain such suspicions of his Royal Highness as were evidently to be inferred from imposing such limitations ? He did not mean to offer any personal eulogium upon that illustrious personage, agreeing as he did with the ministry in the impropriety and irrelevancy of it upon the present occasion ; but still he could not avoid saying that he considered such suspicions wholly unfounded and unnecessary. Why was that illustrious person to be deprived of the necessary power for effectually exercising the royal prerogative ? The right honourable

gentleman told them that he would invest him with all the powers of that prerogative, necessary to carry on external war, because the interests of the country demanded that he should have the most ample powers in that respect ; but that it was otherwise in the internal management of the nation. Why did the right honourable gentleman make this distinction ? Was not this a most dangerous doctrine ? Are we not taught to consider the power of his Majesty and that of the country as one and the same, and that the one assists and supports the other ? Are not the powers of his Majesty in external war materially influenced by the internal management of the country ? With respect to the power of creating peers, the right honourable gentleman had been careful to state the few creations which had taken place during his administration ; and he had been no less studious to point out a period wherein he conceived the power of creating peers to have been abused. But he would contend that the instance brought forward was by no means an abuse of the royal prerogative ; and that these creations were highly necessary and expedient. They were necessary to give to the House of Peers an accession of property and influence corresponding to the growing prosperity of the nation. As to the danger of bad advice being given to the Regent, he could see no reason for assuming that a Regent would be influenced by bad advisers any more than a King ; and to his mind it appeared most clear that any arguments which applied in support of the restrictions in the one case would equally apply to the other. As to the household, he would say that its officers were officers appointed for the purpose of supporting the splendour and dignity of the Crown. The House would do well to consider that in all the plans of reform which had yet been submitted to them, no reformer had ever attempted to encroach on the magnificence of the throne. This had always been considered as essential to the executive ; and surely they could not think it proper, in the present case, to attempt to disjoin that splendour from the Executive. To his Majesty that splendour was now useless ; it could minister to him no enjoyment, it could afford him no gratification. Why, therefore, should there be two households ? Surely, in the present state of the nation, when economy was so necessary, and considering how little prospect there was of his Majesty's recovery, it was everything but wise to saddle the nation with two establishments, one for his Majesty and the other for the Regent. What, however, was the object of the proposed limitation of the Regent's control over the royal household ? The whole object was professed to be delicacy to his Majesty, that his Majesty might find on his recovery the same persons around him whom he saw previous to his calamity. If this was the object, he must say that the method proposed no such security ; according to this resolution the Queen might remove them if she pleased, and he did not know that, in this respect, a tribute of delicacy was more likely to be paid by her Majesty than by his Royal Highness. But the body to which he alluded, the Lords of the Bed-chamber, etc., was also a political body, and the question now was, not whether the

influence of such a political body should remain, but whether it should be put into other hands than those of the Regent. Many books had been lately written on the subject of the influence of the Crown, and some by honourable and right honourable members of that House. In some of these it was contended, and with great show of reason, that the influence of the Crown has not been lately increased, and was barely sufficient for the due carrying on of the business of the nation. He would put it to those gentlemen who entertained these sentiments, how they could conscientiously vote on the present occasion that the powers of the Executive ought to be limited. He would put it to those gentlemen who had the most recent experience of the difficulties thrown in the way of Government by the different parties in that House, and in the country, to say, if they found the management of the public affairs, with the unimpaired vigour of the Crown, so very easy a matter. But if the influence of parties prevailed at present, what would they be during a Regency? A Regency, as was well known, was the period when factions of all kinds were sure to prevail the most. Was it the duty of the Committee, then, to weaken the arm of the Executive at a period when it ought to be the strongest? Was it not their duty so to legislate on the present occasion as to prevent the danger to be apprehended from the collision of these factions and parties, and so as to prevent the undue diminution of the influence of the Crown? He moved to omit the last words of the resolution, "subject to such restrictions and limitations as were connected with the custody of his Majesty's person, and the arrangement of his Household."

Canning followed on the same side, complimenting his young friend—as he was glad in public as in private to call him—on the moderation of tone and the fitness of topics he had relied on; and the amendment was only defeated in a full house by twenty-four.¹

One of the first acts of the Regent was to reappoint his brother to the command of the Army. The scandals which had compelled him to resign in the preceding year were dying out, but they were not yet dead. A good many who had yielded to the clamour of public indignation now half repented their votes, and sober reconsideration of all the facts and circumstances of the case led others to an honest change of opinion. Lord Grey from the first had vehemently denounced the accusation of the Duke of York, and he never ceased to load with obloquy its authors, whose motives he declared to be dastardly and mean.

Ponsonby, without quarrelling with the younger men of his party in the House of Commons who adhered to the austerer view, deprecated Lord Milton's resolution, "That it was highly improper and indecorous in the advisers of the Prince Regent to have recommended the reappointment of the Duke of York to the office of Commander-

¹ 'Parliamentary Debates,' December 31st, 1810, p. 493: "State of the nation—Resolutions respecting Regency."

in-Chief." Perceval justified the reinstatement of the Prince upon the ground that no opinion had been expressed by Parliament touching his personal honour, or imputing to him conscious participation in corruption.

In reply to the taunts and reproaches of Whitbread, who inveighed against those who had aided in driving the Duke from his office yet now acquiesced in his restoration, Lamb declared that he himself had voted for further investigation, having been persuaded at the time that such was necessary; but even then, had the question been taken on the unsatisfactory evidence adduced, he would have said, Not guilty. He certainly had wished for the Duke's removal as a matter of public policy, hardly dealt with as he conceived him to be, and undoubtedly made the victim of a public cry; but the justice of the case had, he thought, been satisfied, and the compulsory retirement of a son of the Sovereign from a post he had previously held with credit, in consequence of the votes of Parliament, would serve as a sufficient warning in future against want of administrative vigilance which, though morally innocent, was politically reprehensible. Many were constrained by the recollection of their previous votes to absent themselves; but forty-nine proved inexorable, while 296 recorded their acquiescence in the replacement of the Duke.

When the restrictions on the Regency expired, at the beginning of 1812, the statesmen who for five-and-twenty years had endured the enmity of the Court, not less for their attachment to religious freedom than because they were the Prince's friends, naturally expected to be called to power. Lords Grenville and Grey were indeed invited to form an administration, and about the disposal of political offices no difficulty was made. But when they demanded the right to nominate afresh to all the offices in the household, the Regent peremptorily refused. An effort was then made to bring about a coalition with some of the existing ministers through the intervention of the Duke of York; his credentials for the purpose being a letter in which occurred the expression made memorable by Moore in the parody which is perhaps the happiest effort of his satiric muse:—

"You know, my dear Fred, I have no predilections,"
My heart is a sieve, in which hopes and affections
Are danced up and down for a moment or two,
And the finer they are the more sure to slip through.

The Whig nobles disdainfully rejected all idea of fusion with Perceval and Hawkesbury, and the Prince, to their amazement and chagrin, placed himself unreservedly in the hands of a party whom he had always professed to regard with aversion and distrust.

But if he changed his political advisers, the Regent was not inclined to alienate old friends who had hitherto constituted his household. He wished Lord Melbourne to continue Lord in Waiting; and though the office thenceforth entailed more duties of attendance at Court

than suited his advancing years, the wish was construed as a command.

Throughout the latter years of the war Lamb supported Government generally in the increasing votes they asked for the Army and Navy. His admiration of Earl Grey and his intimacy with Lord Holland would have drawn him the other way, but his convictions were more nearly those of Grattan and Plunket. While Canning and Wellesley held the seals of the Foreign Office he went cordially with them in the general scope of their foreign policy ; and, believing that in the life-and-death struggle to which the country was committed it was too late to hesitate or yield, he resolved to refuse no reinforcement of munitions or men which were deemed necessary to sustain the army of Wellington in Spain. The opposition of Fox to the original declaration of war with France, and the traditions of his placability and personal good-will towards Napoleon, from which his nephew never swerved, were frequently the theme of frank and sometimes of vehement debate between them. And although during his last brief term of office the great leader of the Whigs had occupied the ground of resistance to Bonaparte's dictation maintained by his deceased rival, it was not unreasonably contended that, had he lived to witness the further progress of the seemingly abortive struggle, and the vast cumulation of national debt incurred each succeeding year on terms more onerous, and entailing enhanced burthens of taxation, Fox would have sided with the friends of peace and left the despotic powers of the Continent to fight it out among themselves,—Lamb thought differently. He undervalued, probably, the evils of heavy taxation and of usuriously contracted debt, but he was right enough in arguing that fiscal or financial objections were not the basis of Fox's general view of foreign policy. Such considerations would not have outweighed with him those involving the freedom of the sea and the independence of the realm, and if he believed these to be in jeopardy he would not have stopped to ask if the augmented liability was eventually to be feared. How little his mind was fitted to estimate accurately possible or probable consequences of war was illustrated by a curious incident of his earlier life. A year after the struggle with America had begun he bet Lord Bolingbroke a thousand guineas to one that the national debt would never reach £170,000,000, and took the one guinea down, registering the wager at Brooks's with the condition that he was not to be called on to pay it until he was in the Cabinet. Within six years he had kissed hands as Secretary of State, and in the interval the national debt had risen from £127,162,413 to £231,843,631.

Lamb early showed a leaning towards the liberal conservatism of Canning, who had intimate relations with another independent section of which Lord Wellesley was the head. The ranks of both were recruited from the Whigs who thought Lord Grey too exacting, and from the Tories who disliked Perceval as a bigot. The personal friendship of Lord G. Leveson and Lord Carlisle for

Canning softened the aversion of many of the former. Plunket avowed his attachment to Lord Grenville, who more nearly impersonated his ideas than any one else during the latter years of the war; and Grattan, whose confidence he completely shared, gravitated towards the same point. It would be difficult to say in what these various sections differed from one another, all of them professing to regard the abolition of religious disabilities as the distinctive feature of sound policy. But the egotism of leadership and the prejudices engendered in bygone collisions kept their respective chiefs sometimes at arms' length, and sometimes wholly apart. While the Government was barren in legislation and dull in debate, their accomplished and eloquent opponents were constantly originating convergent movements against them, which, but for mutual distrust, would probably have proved successful. Lord Grenville had been Premier, and could contemplate no second position. Lord Grey was ready to take the Foreign Office under him, but his hatred of Canning was inappeasable and Whitbread was identified with him. At a muster of the Bedfordshire Militia, of which the latter was colonel, Lord John Russell, then a youthful subaltern, expressed in conversation his regret at the news from town that some efforts at a coalition among the different shades of opposition had failed. "What!" exclaimed Whitbread, "the union with Canning?—never!" So many were the chasms, even in social intercourse, between those who were looking daily for each other's aid, and conscious that without it they could effect nothing, that up to this time, and for many years after, Lord Lansdowne was personally unacquainted with Mr. Canning.

At Devonshire House there was perhaps less of political exclusiveness; and there Lord Boringdon first announced the project of moving an address to the Regent in favour of an administration that would conciliate the confidence of all creeds and classes. The 19th of March was fixed in the Lords for its discussion; and there was a fluttering of anxieties about the roost of power. At Melbourne House several intimates of Lady Caroline assembled on the evening of the discussion to learn the earliest tidings. The debate lasted long; and near midnight Miss Berry found "Lady Holland and fifteen other ladies at supper, waiting the arrival of their friends from the House of Lords. They came at last, crest-fallen Whigs and the party of Canning, all except their chief. Lord Wellesley had entirely failed them at the hour of need, not having chosen to open his mouth."¹ He voted, however, in the minority of seventy-two with Lords Grenville and Grey. For the previous question, moved as an amendment by Lord Grimston, Government had a majority of ninety-three. Perceval did not long survive his triumph. What all the rival strategies of Opposition could not accomplish was effected by the desperate hand of a lunatic, on the evening of the 11th of April, as the minister was entering the House. The populace who crowded

¹ Miss Berry's Journal, March 19th, 1812.

Palace Yard evinced curiosity, but no symptom of compassion or concern ; and the business of new Cabinet making began once more. An idler of fashion with a seat in Parliament, a residence in the centre of the official firmament, and married to a woman of wit and ambition was likely to enjoy keenly the animated suspense that ensued, and to learn more of men and things in such a period of transition than constitutional theories could teach him. Whigs and Canningites concurred in supporting the motion of Mr. Stuart-Wortley on the 21st of May for an address to the Regent calling upon him to take steps for forming an efficient administration. In the division we find the name of Lamb with those of Huskisson, Sandon, and Binning ; Ponsonby, Milton, Whitbread, Althorp, and Tavistock. Ministers only ventured to divide upon the previous question, and even then were beaten by 174 to 170 ; for the consequent motion, half an hour later, that the address should be presented by the Privy Councillors in Parliament, the same individuals voted, but they were then outnumbered by a majority of two. Further negotiations for a junction of parties followed, but each and all proved fruitless, and at length Lord Liverpool was named First Lord of the Treasury, a position which he continued to hold for fifteen years. The seals of the Foreign Department were confided to Lord Castlereagh, and, although it was necessary in his case to treat Catholic emancipation as an open question, the Cabinet was emphatically constituted on the principle of resistance to all measures of civil and religious concession. Lord Eldon was promoted to the woolsack, and Mr. Peel was sent to Ireland, where the whole of the Executive acted under the guidance of the Attorney-General, Saurin, in accordance with the principle of Orangeism. At the end of the session it was announced that a dissolution had been resolved on. Everywhere the standard of "No Popery" was unfurled ; and in the new House of Commons many of the advocates of liberal progress were no longer found. Among those who thus disappeared was William Lamb.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF PARLIAMENT.

*Books and opinions—Melbourne House—Byron—Domestic jars—
‘Glenarvon.’*

SEVEN years' apprenticeship, spent for the most part in desultory reading and irregular attendance at St. Stephen's (not to be named as real or genuine work), had failed to make Lamb, or even to make

him fancy himself a master of parliamentary arts. It sufficed, indeed, to teach him many things important to be known ; but for the present it savoured only of disappointment and disenchantment. He had learned by experience that he was no orator, and that plausibility, good taste, coincidence of opinion with many who listen, sound logic, and an occasional dash of sarcasm—not too saucy from a young man on one of the back benches—will not command a hearing, secure a report in the morning papers, or evoke a careless “devilish good” from the chattering critics at the clubs next day. In spite of many advantages of person, voice, address, leisure, acquaintance, connections, and not a few sincere well-wishers, he had as yet accomplished nothing which scores of young men of his class had not accomplished on their way to epicurean obscurity. Such advantages probably went for less at a time when Parliament contained a much greater proportion of men of birth, fortune, and social accomplishment than it does now. But, on the other hand, the judgment of the House was more exacting and less tolerant of common-place. Men who had bought their seats in the political theatre were ready to back their party chiefs by sitting up all night and walking home to breakfast in the dead of the morning now and then. But occasions of prolonged debate were rare, and afforded few opportunities for neophytes to gain a hearing. For the rest, the majority of the House wanted to be amused or to be excited, or to be moved in some manner, grave or gay. Sheridan made them laugh, Whitbread and Burdett made them angry, Canning and Windham filled them as connoisseurs with delight, Tierney and Perceval with pleasure analogous to that which some of them took in a well-sustained match in the ring or the cock-pit. They instinctively refused to be drawn down to Westminster, or to be detained there from more agreeable occupations, to hear their junior colleagues spout their exercises in debating. Ill done or well done, what did it matter to the nation, or to them, or to anybody except the ambitious adventurers themselves? They represented nothing of popular interest or popular sentiment ; nothing but their own money, or their fathers’ manors, or their uncles’ longing for a blue ribbon. If endowed with indomitable perseverance and clothed with a hide of insusceptibility, they learned by degrees to say all they had to say notwithstanding the buzz of inattention or the spectacle of empty benches ; and in the course of years acquired a character for persistency in speech which answered pretty well as a substitute for oratoric fame. Sensitive and fastidious natures like J. W. Ward and William Lamb froze in this atmosphere of neglect, and all but abandoned in despair the hope of ever making their mark or realising their ambitious dreams. The oftener they tried, the more painfully oppressive self-consciousness became—that deadliest of foes to all true success. Neither had to encounter anything worth mentioning of hindrance or enmity ; that would have been too great luck, for it would have drawn him out of himself, and infused something of reality into exertion. Both listened with discriminating curiosity and gratification to those who were masters

of the arts of fence and exemplars in those of declamation. Again and again the desire of emulating what they saw and heard impelled them to new efforts. Of the two, Ward succeeded better than his friend, who cheered and encouraged him ungrudgingly ; but his letters tell how little he was deceived by the partial praise of friendship into imagining that he had become a power in the House ; and Lamb, less painstaking, though certainly less morbid in temperament, seems to have yielded to the benumbing influences of parliamentary failure and domestic chagrin : and upon the dissolution of 1812 he did not seek re-election to Parliament.

Many of the Opposition lost their seats who could ill be spared, owing rather to the selfishness of borough-owners than to the oscillation of popular opinion. Brougham felt that " Romilly, Tierney, and Lamb being out of Parliament was a great imputation on some of their friends, who must not thereafter talk of the fickleness and wrong-headedness of the people. These professors of party attachment had no sort of scruple to dissolve the regular Whig interest, or leave it with a single leader in the House of Commons, rather than forego the gratification of giving some cousin or toad-eater a power of franking letters !"¹

Somewhat later, himself excluded, Brougham changed his mind, and did not regret Lamb and Horner being left out, because the former had become as much a Canningite as Ward ; and the latter was so ill that nothing but perfect rest would keep him alive.² He thought Lord Thanet ought to bring in Tierney for one of his safe seats, but the men of mere talent and worth had but a frail hold on the political affection of men who loved to do what they would with their own. Close boroughs were part of their investments when they were not part of their inheritance, and were sold, let, or given away like other descriptions of property. Sooner than abandon the career he loved, Tierney took to fighting contested elections at Colchester, on which his wife, who was wrapped up in his success, lavished from time to time the chief part of her fortune. Lamb took it easier, and made no immediate effort to get back to St. Stephen's, though George Lamb thought there was a prospect of a seat for William through the Duke of Devonshire.³

While the zest for pleasure was unchilled, and the power of fascination at its height, study and reflection asserted their claim to comparatively little of his time. The ambition to show in debate would every now and then prompt him to work up a subject, as people say ; and, with access to the best sources of information about the Court and in society, with a good stock of constitutional reading in his retentive memory, the labour could not have been irksome, and success might have been great had he been less sensitive to criticism and more sanguine or enthusiastic in temperament. But, like so many of the finest

¹ To Earl Grey from Brougham Hall, September 10th, 1812.

² To Earl Grey from Croxteth Park, October 16th, 1812.

³ Letter of Brougham, from Greeta Bridge, October 24th.

minds, the flaw of doubt continually marred his would-be wholeheartedness in the advocacy of broad and generous principles. He hated the creeping palsy of misgiving, and tried hard to conquer and resist it. But it would not be driven away ; nor, even when most carefully prepared, and assured of fellowship in argument by the men he most respected, could he get rid of the self-consciousness which is the great hindrance to effect either in public or private utterance. In the worth of right, in the wisdom of justice, in the safety of courage, in the duty of toleration, in the prudence of generosity, and above all, in the divine satisfaction of contributing to the happiness and contentment of others, he was a genuine believer ; and thus it came to pass that his name is found inscribed among the combatants who conquered in all the great struggles against prejudice, privilege, fanaticism, and oppression, from the death of Pitt until his own. But for twenty years it must be owned that as a subaltern he gained little distinction in the fight ; and this not because he lacked the spirit of emulation, but because he wanted moral earnestness. He had no exclusive faith in religion, or politics, or love. He could argue eloquently, lucidly, wittily for Anglicanism, as against the Curia, the Kirk, or the Tabernacle ; but nobody could convince him that there was not a deal of good in all these, and that kindly, honourable, and learned men might not honestly consider their pretensions superior. He would banter alternately Tories and Radicals for opposite faults ; and he was ready to speak or vote, stand forward or stand by, as the honour of his party required. But he could not forget his inherent weaknesses, and often infirmities, or be mesmerised into the delusion that patriotism and wisdom were of the Whigs alone. And the bitter experience of his private life had sown tares in the field of his affections, till at length he had made up his mind there was nothing for it but to let them grow together unto the harvest. When this sad process of disenchantment, and goodnatured despair of constancy began, who knoweth ? who, if he knew, would have the cruelty to tell ? The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the stranger ought not to intermeddle therewith. Were there propriety, there would be no profit in laying bare griefs and agonies of a sensitive and excitable spirit. For the most part, he was able, and he chose, to gulp down the poison of his happiness ; and with such antidote or anodyne as he could lay hands upon, to live on, without more than occasional wincing, manfully on the whole, usefully and cheerily. One of his specifics, and one of the best of them, was reading ; gradually the habit gained upon him until books became the companions of half his life ; he took the same pleasure in them that he did in the society of wise and witty people. He communed with philosophers, theologians, scholars, poets, jurists, novelists, satirists, all in turn ; and sometimes mutely, sometimes audibly, combated their notions or damned their spile. The result of reading so varied, preserved, as it was, in memory so retentive, showed itself notably in conversation, where, by the suffrage of all who knew him, he was truly delightful. The quaintness and originality of

his manner, fitful, abrupt, full of irony, and at times of tenderness almost feminine, gave to his talk a charm specific and peculiar, unlike that of other men with whom he lived. Inevitably it was a continued irritant to the pedantic and impatient, the frigid and fanatical. Now he was accused of levity ; now of cynicism. One blockhead was convinced that he was a mere trifler who had no opinions, another was persuaded that he was a high-born sybarite who disguised hard and heartless views for the selfish sake of passing popularity. Both were utterly mistaken ; from first to last it may be said of him with truth that he was a better man than he affected to be.

Old books and new by turns attracted him. He delighted in the theological writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and spent no little time in the study of patristic divinity. His familiarity with the subjects they discussed would now and then show itself in a striking quotation, or the correction of an inaccurate one by some one in his presence. He kept up his classic recollections, chiefly through Horace and Juvenal, of whom he never tired, and many of whose most suggestive passages he turned into English verse. One charming paraphrase, rather than translation, was published with his name in one of the annuals of a later period :

'Tis late, and I must haste away,
My usual hour of rest is near ;
And do you press me, youths, to stay—
To stay and revel longer here ?

Then give me back the scorn of care
Which spirits light in health allow ;
And give me back the dark brown hair
Which curled upon my even brow.

And give me back the sportive jest
Which once could midnight hours beguile,
The life that bounded in my breast,
And joyous youth's becoming smile !

And give me back the fervid soul
Which love inflamed with strange delight,
When erst I sorrowed o'er the bowl
At Chloë's coy and wanton flight.

'Tis late, and I must haste away,
My usual hour of rest is near ;
But give me *these* and I will stay—
Will stay till morn—and revel here !

With Mr. Allen, the librarian at Holland House, he had innumerable polemics. Allen possessed great learning and discrimination in judging of the authenticity of manuscripts and the comparative purity of editions. As brusque as Lamb himself, he was more intolerant of opinions he deemed indefensible by logic ; and having reasoned himself early out of all belief, he spent the rest of his life in trying to

lead others to the same conclusion, or to laugh them into scepticism. He had, besides, the habit of saying of every man of superior intellect he knew, that at heart he was an unbeliever, though for policy sake he might conform to established usages. He was, in fact, a genuine bigot in materialism, and put about the notion widely that his accomplished patron, and most of those who were his favoured guests, held similar opinions. But of Lamb this was certainly untrue. Perplexity between conflicting views regarding the great mystery of existence saddened many of his lonely hours. He envied those who had got through the stage of doubt, and had done with it. He longed for a solution of his own misgivings, and read and argued on in the sincere hope of finding it. Far from wishing to be convinced of the truth of the negative philosophy, his nature turned from it with a shudder. Milton was among his favourite companions, and he would recite whole passages with exquisite feeling and expression from his works.

Whatever may have been the effects of life passed in the whirl of distraction and indulgence which characterised the early days of the Regency, they were nowhere more traceable perhaps than upon the young and impressionable dwellers at Melbourne House. Lady Melbourne had ceased, indeed, to be more than casually amused by whims or novelties ; and she moved on in her own diplomatic way, observant of all that was going on around her in looks and spirits, less brilliant than she once had been, though still not a bit like sixty-two ; in artifices of dress and arts of manner more consummate than ever. Like Lady Holland at Kensington, and Lady Spencer at St. James's Place, her ascendancy in the household was supreme ; yet there were some things her influence could not control, some energies she could not fire. William would do anything to please her when asked ; but she knew it was no use always asking him to work as others worked for political advancement. Disenchantment seemed to have spread its insidious spell over him ; and though weary enough of *ennui*, she could not bring him, and he could not bring himself, to set about any undertaking requiring effort or toil. His wife, unceasingly active, spent her existence with as little concentration of aim. Painting, music, reading, writing verses, patronising plays, taking part in private theatricals, dreaming romantically, and talking in a way to make people stare ; riding on horseback, often coquetting, sometimes quarrelling (she hardly knew about what) with her husband, trying to please her father-in-law, who thought her a fidget ; and trying to please her child, whose wistful gaze of incurious wonder made her for the moment staid and sad :—these and a world of intermingling trifles filled up her time. But her versatility found no resting-place, and the fatal habit of mentally looking into the glass grew upon her day by day. Her quick powers of appreciation were thrown away upon a glittering crowd of forms and faces, but few of which she paused to look at long enough to be able to caricature. None of the remarkable persons whom she met in society fixed her attention or

riveted her fancy. It was not a profitable condition of mind, but it had been well for her and all who loved her, had her butterflyhood continued longer. Out of the unknown a new influence was about to break forth on English society, and especially upon that portion of it wherein she moved, compared with which all other talents, genius, and originality seemed to her but as so many dull and motionless lamps, while the lightning was flashing in at the window. An instinctive sense of misgiving impelled her at first to turn away; but when this new element of dazzling and resistless power came so gently as not even to cause a start, and in its vivid and seemingly harmless beauty lingered and played all the summer evening round her, her imagination was led captive to its will.

Up to this time the name of Byron, save to a comparative few, may be said to have been unknown. Lord Carlisle, though one of his guardians, had seldom inquired after him during his college days; and on his coming of age forgot to ask him to dinner. When he took the oaths and his seat at Westminster he was not recognised by any one of his peers; and on the Chancellor offering his hand to welcome him, as a new member of the House, he mistook the courtesy for the form of party enlistment, and took it so ungraciously that Lord Eldon turned away with a frown. Morbidly sensitive to neglect, and attributing it to a deformity of which nobody but himself thought or cared, and fevered with an insatiable thirst for distinction, he published in 1809 a satire in which he attacked nearly every critic and poet of the day, in order to be revenged for the ridicule cast by Brougham on his 'Hours of Idleness' in the 'Edinburgh Review.' With his Cambridge class-fellow, Mr. Hobhouse, he spent two years abroad, and returned full of aspirations as a poet and a politician. Through Samuel Rogers, his only acquaintance of note, he was introduced to Lord Holland, who, *more suo*, forgetting the petulance of his 'prentice rhymes, aided him cheerfully with information and advice for his maiden speech in the Lords. It was an undoubted success, and he was forthwith enrolled as a promising recruit in the ranks of the Liberal Party. But in the crowd of celebrities and competitors for notice at Holland House, his vanity might have eaten its heart out with scant pity or heed, had he not been able to lay the world under tribute in a very different sphere. His speech, he thought, would prove a good advertisement for "Childe Harold," which appeared a few days afterwards. Rogers and Moore had seen it in the proof, and foretold the triumph which awaited him. The former told Lady Caroline Lamb that she ought to know the new poet, and lent her his copy to read before the work came out. Soon afterwards Lady Westmoreland introduced him to her. Her first impression was unfavourable, and she wrote in her diary, "Mad, bad, and dangerous to know." But the *éclat* of his poem made him in a few weeks the star without rival of society. Wherever he went, and he soon went everywhere, to use his own expression,—“the women suffocated him.” His air of abstraction and look of melancholy,

and the rumours put about of his eccentric life, all contributed to fan the flame. Emulation for his favour became fierce, and the wiles spread for his bewitchment were innumerable. Lady Caroline avers that she spread none. She had called at Holland House after a morning ride through wind and rain; he was unexpectedly announced, and she owns that she ran away to readjust her toilet before they met. His grave attention pleased her; the interview ended in his asking leave to call, and the acquaintance thus begun quickly ripened into friendship.

He lived much at Melbourne House, where he was received on terms of the utmost familiarity. For the talents of society, in which Lady Melbourne had probably no equal in her day, his admiration was unbounded. The world she knew by long and keen observation, and whose scenes she had the rare faculty of picturing by a few graphic touches, was all a new world to him. There was hardly a person of note among courtiers, politicians, artists, or men of letters, from the time of Garrick and Chatham, whom she had not known; and there was not a prominent character living whom she did not weigh in the balance of her own judgment, and whose idiosyncrasy she could not when she would accurately tell. This, with casual acquaintances, was not often. Experience had taught her the thanklessness of those who delight in another's unguarded candour. She used to say that few men were to be trusted with their neighbours' secrets, and hardly any woman with her own. But she found Byron better worth gossiping with than other young men of his years. He asked her questions which it really interested her to answer; and, notwithstanding her habitual wariness and reserve, a remarkable degree of confidence sprang up between them.

With Lady Caroline it was hero-worship. The fascination wrought upon her susceptible and credulous fancy by his account of his youth and foreign adventures; his dark hints at the hidden griefs, the sorrows of his loneliness, the pain of early disappointments, and his real or pretended indifference to passing success; the ever changing beauty of his features, and the glittering splendour of his verse; and all these laid with a look and tone of ineffable gallantry at her feet by one whose nobility dated from the conquest, fairly bewildered her. It is all very well for those who have never been brought within the perilous circle of such a spell to talk pharisaically of the ease with which it might have been resisted. But to be just one must estimate antecedents and surroundings: the enervating atmosphere of dissipation, and the *furore* about a picturesque poet of high degree. If these things are not taken into account, what really is left but the mingled echo of two names, of whose brief association and subsequent severance the world has heard too much and understands too little? It was impossible that such intimacy should not be remarked, but this was exactly what Byron's vanity wanted. With all his profession of democratic enthusiasm, he was habitually swayed by aristocratic feeling; with all his romance in rhyme about devotion to nameless

and secluded beauty, he was vain as any coxcomb of being greeted by the smiles of quality, and to be known as the favourite of supreme fashion. In the best set Lady Caroline was just then one of the fair and fickle rulers. Melbourne House was the centre of gaiety and revel.

"My cousin Hartington wanted to have waltzes and quadrilles ; and at Devonshire House it would not be allowed,¹ so we had them in the great drawing-room at Whitehall. All the *bon ton* assembled there continually. There was nothing so fashionable. But after a time Byron contrived to sweep them all away."

For his overweening egotism, gratified by special recognition in the glittering throng, chafed at devotion to the pastime in which he could not participate. He preferred sentimental talk with a clever and wayward woman, whose self-idolatry, already too mature, ripened into fruit as bitter as his own. One who knew her long and well, and who was more than others lenient to her errors, has said of her that her conversation had all the charm of intellect, fancy, culture, and a low musical voice : it had but one fault, that it was all about herself. There was an affinity in this respect between them which in itself became gradually the cause of disappointment and vexation. Craving on the one side encountered exaction on the other ; and as neither knew how to stifle ill-humour or chagrin, he would grow moody and she fretful when their rival egotisms jarred :

For the sensitive plant, which could yield small fruit
Of the love that it felt from the leaf to the root,
Desired more than all, it loved more than ever
Where none wanted, but it could belong to the giver.

She brought him fresh verses on which she had spent half the sleepless night, in an agony of hope that his eye would kindle and his lips respond to emotions she had thus endeavoured to express. But though he failed not to praise the well-chosen epithet and flowing rhythm, he was far too full of his own greater thoughts to be able, had he tried, to affect enthusiasm at the tinkling of her lyric bells. In her mortification, she would inwardly upbraid him with being, like the rest of his sex, too self-engrossed ; and the time was to come when she would tell him so in no measured terms. But with "Childe Harold" she could not thus make free.

At a reception one evening Lord Holland took an antique censer from a cabinet to show it to some learned guest ; as he passed Byron and Lady Caroline, he turned and said gallantly to her, "You see I bear you incense." "Offer it to Lord Byron," she replied, "he is accustomed to it." How soon the poet began to tire of the confidential iteration of morbid fancies which were not redeemed by the grandeur of outline or depth of colouring that marked those drawn

¹ The Duke had married a second time Lady Elizabeth Foster, daughter of the Earl of Bristol and sister of the eccentric Bishop of Derry.

from the dark chamber of his imagery who can tell? But he loved being conspicuous in everything ; and above the admiration of women he coveted the envy of men, and liked being spoken of as a favoured intimate at Melbourne House.

He could not resist the temptation to repay rival admiration in her presence by passing looks of love. Sitting opposite to him at table at Spencer House, her eye rested on the poet's features as he paid attention to a beautiful woman next him ; and Lord J. Russell was startled to notice that in a fit of frenzy she had bitten through the glass she still held in her hand.¹

Throughout the year 1813 Byron continued to visit constantly at Whitehall and Kensington. The "Giaour" and "Bride of Abydos" kept his name before the public, and in the estimation of his female critics maintained his reputation. Lord Holland was too good-natured, and too loyal in everything to the taste of his wife, to be niggardly in his praise. Other men more fastidious and outspoken in their criticisms tried to induce the poet to take more serious interest in politics, but without effect ; his letters and journals evince hardly a trace of sympathy or regard for the great events which were stirring the heart of Christendom ; and it seems to have been for him too great a sacrifice of pleasure to attend frequently even as a listener any long debate in the House of Lords. His second speech did not attract much notice ; and with all his pretentious vows of zeal for liberty, he was a soldier that, without encouragement of life and drum, could not be got to march. His time was spent for the most part in flattering pretty women, or being flattered by them ; and by his own account he was not sure with which of them he was most in love. Lamb grew tired of his airs of self-importance, and laughed at his wife's exaggerated estimate of his perfections. If sometimes provoked at her misplaced friendship, he anticipated that it would soon wear out, and sighed only at the illusion he was unable to dispel. He knew better what Byron was than she could ever know, and felt secure that ere long he would declare himself bored, and betake himself to other company. There was another circumstance which no doubt influenced him, but of which few were aware. Byron had in confidence told Lady Melbourne his intention and desire to form a matrimonial alliance, in order that he might settle down at Newstead and take the part that became him in public life. Would she advise him? Did she not know every one worth knowing in the sphere out of which he did not care to wed? Would she not save him from the daughters of Heth? To the mind of the old lady thus consulted, no connection seemed more suitable than one with her young relative, the daughter of Sir Noel Milbanke, who, beside many other attractions, possessed a considerable fortune, and was heiress to the barony of Wentworth in her own right. Without professing to fall in love, the poet offered her his hand. It was refused, but with so much kindness, and even com-

¹ In conversation with the writer.

pliment, that he readily agreed that they should continue friends, and upon indifferent subjects correspond.

At Cheltenham, then in highest vogue, many of those with whom he was most intimate—the Hollands, Cowpers, Jerseys, Oxfords, and Melbournes—passed September pleasantly. Lady Melbourne had more leisure there ; she listened to his wandering talk and gave him good advice. Whatever it was, he believed it sound and wise. On receipt of a letter from her not long afterwards he wrote :—

“ I have had a letter from Lady Melbourne, the best friend I ever had in my life, and the cleverest of women. I write with most pleasure to her, and her answers are so sensible, so *tactique*. I never met with half her talent. If she had been a few years younger, what a fool she would have made of me, had she thought it worth her while, and I should have lost a valuable and most agreeable *friend*.”¹

“ The Corsair ” was followed by “ Lara. ” The hero of the latter, writes Ward, “ is just the same sort of gloomy, haughty, mysterious villain as Childe Harold, the Giaour, the Corsair and all the rest. There is a strange mixture of fertility and barrenness. One would think it was easier to invent a new character than to describe the old one over and over again. ”²

On the 20th of April, 1814, the King of France entered London accompanied by the Prince Regent, who went to meet him at Stanmore. The Duke of Montrose, Master of the Horse, and Viscount Melbourne were in attendance. A vast concourse of all classes awaited their arrival in town, and the populace, they scarce knew why (except that they had a certain notion that the end of the weary war was near), vociferously bade the Bourbon Godspeed on his way back to Paris. Later on, the allied Sovereigns came to thank in person the royal representative of England’s constancy and courage, which had stood fast for them and theirs when all else in Europe quailed. For weeks London was in carnival. Rejoicings and festivities never ceased ; and those who, through evil report and good report, had helped to sustain the policy thus crowned at last with triumph could not but feel, as Lamb confessed he did, historic exultation. He was very proud of his country, and not a little proud of having never despaired of its success. When all their other visits were paid, the Czar and the King of Prussia went with the Regent to inspect the great naval arsenals, and were entertained by the officers of the fleet.

On leaving Portsmouth for Goodwood, early on the 25th of June, their Majesties were received at breakfast by the Duke of Richmond. In the afternoon they visited Lord Egremont at Petworth, where a brilliant company, including Lord and Lady Melbourne and William Lamb, awaited them. Thence they proceeded to Dover and embarked next day.

¹ Byron’s diary, November 13th and 17th, 1813.

² Letter to Bishop of Llandaff, July 7th, 1814.

By letters patent of the 11th of August, 1815, Lord Melbourne was created a peer of the United Kingdom, as Baron Melbourne of Melbourne in the county of Derby. He took the oaths and his seat on the 5th of February, 1816. Early in this year Lord Byron had married Miss Milbanke with the advice and approval of Lady Melbourne, and in spite of many petulant warnings of evil to come from Lady Caroline. Her cousin might be learned, and pious, and philosophical, but she was quite unsuited for a soul that was all sensibility and romance. It would never do; she was quite sure of that. A woman that went to church *punctually*, understood statistics, and had a bad figure; how could Conrad find any real community of sentiment with such a being? But the real grievance was that Byron could no longer be a lord-in-waiting to her majesty expectant of Whitehall. Ere long he heard of her complainings at his absence and alienation; and he had the effrontery to address to his peevish and hypochondriacal friend the lines beginning—

“And sayest thou, Cara,” etc.,

in which, to excuse the discontinuance of his visits, he tells her that, in fact, he is thinking of nobody else, and apologises for conjugal perfidy by the assurance that “falsehood to all else is truth to thee.” The only palliation that can be suggested for all the inconsistent, exaggerated, and indefensible freaks in rhyme of which poor Lady Caroline was the theme is the poetic licence Byron gave himself of treating æsthetically the impulse of the hour without the least regard to what had gone before or was to follow after, and with entire indifference to the obligations of delicacy and of truth. The world has already heard too much of his ill-starred union, and how, during its brief continuance, he was willing to have it believed that he still valued the society of Lady Caroline more than that of his wife. During Lady Caroline’s temporary stay in Ireland a correspondence was kept up between them in prose and verse. At length, on learning that she was about returning to England, Byron resolved to put an end to all future communication, and did so in a letter which bore on its seal the coronet and initials of Lady Oxford, whom he knew she disliked. Before she recovered from the illness that ensued, he had quitted England, and they met no more.

Ere he left he was guilty of the unmanly reply in verse to her last entreaty not to be forgotten :—

“Remember thee! remember thee!
Till Lethe quench life’s burning stream,
Remorse and shame shall cling to thee
And haunt thee like some feverish dream.

“Remember thee! Ay, doubt it not,
Thy husband, too, shall think of thee,
By neither shalt thou be forgot—
Thou *false* to him, thou *fiend* to me.”

The publication of the well-known verses in which he made his affected sorrow known to the world piqued her into an outward show of indifference which she did not feel ; but her mortification was deep, and her temper, ill-fitted naturally to bear the strain, became ungovernable. Many tales, for the most part exaggerated, were put about in idleness or malice. That which gained widest currency related to a page whom she was said to have ill-treated in a fit of passion. Her own version of the affair, written some time afterwards, is very different :—

“The boy was a little *espiègle*, and would throw detonating balls into the fire. Lord Melbourne always scolded me for this, and I the boy. One day I was playing ball with him, he threw a squib into the fire. I threw the ball at his head, it hit him on the temple, and he bled. He cried out, “Oh! my lady, you have killed me.” Out of my senses, I rushed into the hall and screamed, “Oh, God, I have murdered the page!” The servants and people in the street caught the sound, and it was soon spread about. William Lamb would live with me no longer. His family insisted on our separation. While instruments were drawing up, in one month I wrote and sent ‘Glenarvon’ to the press. It was written at night, without the knowledge of any one but a governess, Miss Walsh. I sent for a copyist, and when he came she pointed to me seated at a table and dressed in boy’s clothes. He would not believe that a schoolboy could write such a thing. In a few days I received him dressed as usual. I told him the author, William Osmand, was dead. When printed, I sent it to my husband, who was delighted with it, and we became united just as the world thought we were parted for ever.”

The truth was that, in the interval which had elapsed, Lamb repented. Many of her eccentricities and incoherences had come to his knowledge for the first time when it was supposed he was about to put her away. Vexed and humiliated as he had long been by what he deemed her unpardonable wilfulness, he could not bring himself to make a public example of one whom he had loved so passionately when life was young, and whose girlish fears and warnings that she was incapable of self-control he had vowed to disregard. Had he not left her with too little guidance? Ought he to fling her in the face of the hissing world, and from such a height of luxury and indulgence, down such a steep of ignominy, humiliation, and reproach? He felt he could not do it, and readily clutched at the excuse her strange and foolish novel unexpectedly offered to reprove the but half-accountable offender. Others might say or think what they would, but he read in his mother’s face, that face of marvellous expression even in old age, that her subtler nature and more resolute will would approve rather than disapprove his resolution. She could not bid him sacrifice his life to a crazed and fitful humour ; but if he had the generosity and determination to endeavour to exorcise the evil spirit, she would think more highly of his understanding and his worth. His wife had not upbraided him with forsaking her but bowed submissively to what

she called her fate, and for once surprised those around her by her equanimity. Near relatives were apprised of what was in contemplation, and consented to arrangements being made with such consideration and privacy that the outer world might still remain ignorant in some degree of the change of relation intended. The deed was prepared for signature, and when all the parties necessary for its completion were in attendance, he went to speak a few last soothing words to her about their son, who was to remain with her at Bocket as before. Her brother and the man of law waited patiently for awhile, and then impatiently for a good deal longer; and when at length the former went to the parties to the meditated act of renunciation he found her seated beside him feeding him with tiny scraps of transparent bread and butter. And so the storm blew over for that time, and she made all manner of promises to be tractable, and obedient, and calm. But the spoiled child of fortune and affection, though for the hour sincere, was not to be so easily cured of spoiling. The evil spirit had departed for the moment, but, unhappily, it returned.

While the scandal of Lord Byron's separation from his wife was still recent, the story of 'Glenarvon' was announced, which contradicted rumour ascribed to Lady Caroline Lamb. Curiosity was on tip-toe to peep through a window so unexpectedly opened into the home of youth, beauty, and fame prematurely and mysteriously abandoned. The good and the bad, the wise and the unwise, were equally eager to read the book. All were alike disappointed. It was merely a rhapsodical tale, published before any one was aware who could have prevented its appearance, and which owed its brief celebrity to the portrait it was supposed to contain of Byron as he was in social life. His friends not unreasonably protested against imputations unexpectedly cast upon him in his absence and from such a quarter. Save in passing sarcasm, he does not seem to have taken any notice of the attack, and the glaring points of difference between his known career and that of the hero of the tale sufficiently negated the hypothesis that the picture had been literally meant for him. If likeness there were, it was a preposterous caricature. In a fit of indignation, his friend and subsequent biographer, Thomas Moore, wrote a review of the foolish book, which he was about to send to the 'Edinburgh,' when Horner interposed, and without much difficulty convinced him of the inexpediency of doing so. In some journals it was handled with severity not greater than it deserved; consideration for the feelings of family and friends made others silent. That its perusal could have had any other effect upon Lamb than that of exciting his pity is inconceivable, and to suppose, as its erratic authoress did, that it justified to him her extravagant demeanour where the poet was concerned, is simply impossible. Whatever was blameworthy in her predilection for Byron or her manner of evincing it, it was far eclipsed by the infatuation and incoherence of "Calantha"; while the incidents of fashionable dissipation are thrown into the shade by a grotesque combination of foppery and Whiteboyism. It was not surprising that

all who felt concerned for her reputation and welfare should have concurred to deprecate the notion of her again trying her hand in fiction. But "Glenarvon," in spite of its defects, had had a sort of success which makes a publisher ready to advise a second venture ; and before long she was busily engaged in weaving the plot of another story, which made its appearance in due time.

Byron on quitting England addressed to her the well-known lines beginning with

Farewell, if ever fondest prayer.

He felt or affected pique at her travesty of the supposed incidents of his life, which he laughed at as a rather insincere production when Madame de Staël asked him was the likeness correct. But he admitted the identity by volunteering the admission that part of a letter of his as given in the story was genuine.

Lady Caroline was at Brocket when she learned what he had said, and forthwith ordered a bonfire to be prepared, in which she had him burned in effigy; and then transmitted to him an account of his sentence and execution. None of her compositions attained high commendation from the critics of the day. "Glenarvon," "Graham Hamilton," and "Ada Reis," were the only novels acknowledged as the productions of her pen, though others were ascribed to her authorship. In the *Annuals* are to be found not a few stanzas of merit.

Ever impressionable, her husband yielded to the literary influences around him ; and now and then wrote pungently or picturesquely as the whim inspired him ; or snatched a torch from some of the revellers in rhyme as they passed by, and waved it gracefully aloft as if to show that he too could versify if he would. Here is a fragment preserved by Jerdan, who coaxed him sometimes to write in the *Literary Gazette*, and says that he was certainly the pleasantest of pleasant men :—

What ! is the ancient Shepherd dead?
 The Patriarch of the Mountains gone?
 And is all his white hair withered,
 That once like snow in the moonlight shone?
 And is yon old dame left alone
 To battle with the world? Alas!
 How different from the thing she was!

He was no common kind, who held
 An idle occupation here;
 Nor in fantastic dreams beheld
 Wild visions from another sphere;
 But his mind was firm and clear,
 And many useful things could tell,
 And, at times, on loftier story dwell.

Every bird that wandereth forth,
 And every grass and herb that sips
 Nourishment from the rainy North

He knew, aye, and the dark eclipse,
 The moon, the sun, and why he dips
 His head beneath the burning seas,
 And nature's many mysteries.

Oh, he was well beloved there !
 The very breezes seem'd to play,
 In fondness, with his silver hair ;
 But now he's vanished from the day,
 And shook his eighty years away.
 Free as his mountain winds is he,
 Let loose to immortality.

Huskisson, Palmerston, and Brougham were among the Christmas party at Brocket, where the first-named talked without reserve to Lady Melbourne of public affairs, of his belief that Canning would soon join the Government, and of his hope that her son would ere long re-enter the House of Commons. Arrangements were already in progress for his doing so through the friendly intervention of the Damers. At Portarlington twelve obedient burgesses went through the ceremony as often as desired of sending a new member to St. Stephen's. On the last occasion, the Earl, in his *congé d'élire*, had nominated one Richard Shakespear, who was now about to accept the Stewardship of East Hendred in order to make room for William Lamb. Brougham wrote all he learned to Lord Grey. He had been for some time getting up his case about the continuance of the income tax, against which during the ensuing session he led the Opposition to unaccustomed victory.¹

CHAPTER VII.

RE-ENTERS PARLIAMENT.

Speech on reduction of offices—Returned for Peterborough—Speech on the Address—Secret Committee—Death of Lady Melbourne—George Lamb M.P. for Westminster—Memoirs of Sheridan.

To appease the angry cry of dissatisfaction at the maintenance in time of peace of military establishments unprecedentedly large, for which no probable need could be shown, Lord George Cavendish moved an address to the Regent, praying that steps might be taken without delay to reduce the number of troops, and to retrench the civil expenditure. Palmerston defended the army estimates for the year as

¹ See his letters to Earl Grey, January 9th, 11th, 22nd, 1816.

moderate ; 28,000 men was a reasonable force for home service ; and considering that there were still old reckonings on account of the lately concluded war, and garrisons to be provided for our newly acquired colonies, he thought the Government ought not to be blamed for adhering to the amount of eight millions already voted. When 1817 came they could better judge whether the standing force ought to be reduced. Althorp, A. Baring, Brougham, Duncannon, Grattan, Mackintosh, Milton, G. Ponsonby, Plunket, Romilly, Tavistock, and Lamb voted for the motion, but were beaten by fifty-six.

A vacancy having occurred in the representation of Wicklow, Mr. Ponsonby retired from Peterborough, and was returned without opposition for the county. Lamb desired to replace him in the seat his grandfather and uncle so long had occupied, and early in April he was returned for the cathedral town ;¹ Richard Sharp being his successor at Portarlinton.

On the 7th of May, Lord Althorp moved for a select committee to inquire into the pay of public officers, with a view to retrenchment. Two days after his notice had been given, a Treasury Commission was appointed, within certain limits to inquire into new offices and augmented salaries ; but though its members were respectable men, he thought it was the duty of the House freely to investigate the matter for itself. Lamb spoke with much effect, objecting especially that our military establishments had not been reduced to a peace footing.

“ He thought that, after all the explanations which had been given, strong grounds for inquiry still remained, an inquiry which, without any disrespect to the members of the new commission, would be better executed by a committee of that House. The Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer had founded his objections on the lateness of the session, and the tardy progress of a committee. He did not think that technical arguments like these were suited to a period of such severe and general pressure, or that they were such as could weigh with a House of Commons anxious to discharge its duties to the country. The House was now called upon to consider whether they would at length give to the people those benefits which they were expected to confer. It was said on the other side that confidence ought to be placed in the pledges offered by ministers ; but he believed the pledge to which the public looked, and on which they founded all their hopes, was the solid and substantial one given by that House, in its defeat of the Government project for renewing the income tax. If they did not redeem the pledge then given, they had only excited idle expectations, and acquired a delusive popularity.

¹ The editor of the Melbourne Papers fancies this to have been “a slip,” regarding Melbourne, who, *ex abundantia cautelæ*, he says, was returned for Northampton, not Peterborough. A second glance at the official register of all members who have sat in St. Stephen's since the conquest would have satisfied Mr. Sanders that the town of Northampton never had the honour of electing the future Premier, but that the burgesses of the caputal town for which his grandfather sat were so fortunate in 1816, and again at the dissolution of 1818.

His absence from a seat in that House had but served to confirm his conviction of the embarrassed situation of the country, and of the extraordinary symptoms which had accompanied the return of peace. It was not, he admitted, surprising that a war which had shaken every Throne in Europe, and driven every system of finance except our own through the ordeal of bankruptcy, should in its conclusion be attended with extraordinary effects. Such multiplied disasters could not pass over our heads like a Summer cloud, and leave no trace behind. The country, however, had done its part ; nothing was to be seen but a spirit of cordial co-operation, and mutual desire to accommodate. A noble Lord opposite had talked of attempts of propagating a base delusion. He had seen with as much regret as the noble Lord a few exaggerated statements in different publications ; but in that House, and on the part of his honourable friends, he denied that any practices had been adopted or any topics adverted to which were calculated to produce mischievous impressions. In point of fact, he did not believe that any delusion existed in the public mind in relation to this subject. The public were as little led astray into wild expectations, and had as clear and distinct a view of what was practicable in retrenchment as the noble Lord. What was looked for was example, and the effect of just principles adopted with sincerity, and carried into operation with vigour. He had never seen in that House so much apathy to considerations of economy—an apathy too well corresponding with the disposition of the Government. He begged, however, to warn Ministers, and to implore the House not to entertain the belief that a similar apathy was to be found in the present silence of the people. It was an unfortunate coincidence that this indifference hitherto manifested, except on one memorable occasion, should occur at a period when popular meetings were suspended, and the expression of the public voice was consequently relaxed. Friendly as he was to such declarations of public feeling, he should be sorry to see the functions of the Executive assumed on these occasions ; and it would be most painful to him to find that a persuasion prevailed that, without the constant superintendence of the constituent body, there was no security for the public service. Should such an opinion however prevail, it would be owing solely to the conduct of Ministers. In ordinary times, inquiries of this nature were better intrusted to the Government ; but under extraordinary circumstances, and when retrenchment was to be carried far, and to be directed to great objects, he was satisfied that Ministers had neither the courage nor the means of carrying it into effect by their own influence, and he submitted, therefore, the propriety of arming them with the authority of that House. It was true, perhaps, that no possible system of retrenchment or reform could satisfy all the hopes which sanguine spirits might conceive ; but the mere mention of the word inspired nothing but distrust, when applied to the existing Administration. He had had many opportunities of marking this impression on the public mind. It was chiefly founded on the attempt to impose unconstitutional taxes, and

to procure the consent of Parliament to exorbitant estimates, both of which they had been compelled to relinquish. This feeling gave a new colour to the language universally employed, and created an opinion that it was necessary to watch every motion of the Government, and that the best and only security for their conduct was to withhold from them the public supplies. He begged them to reflect that they held in their hands, not only their own character and responsibility, but the character of the country and the safety of the Constitution. Their measures most certainly, instead of exciting confidence or affection had hitherto produced nothing but alienation, jealousy, suspicion, and distrust."

At the close of the session Canning became President of the Board of Control, an office which he continued to hold for several ensuing years.

The harvest of 1816 was the worst since the beginning of the century, and at Christmas the price of wheat rose to 103 shillings a quarter. After the quotation of eighty shillings was passed, importation was free; but the unwise law which prohibited clearance for consumption under that price had prevented any considerable stock from being accumulated in bond; and when relief was wanted to avert famine, the requisite supplies were not forthcoming. Bitter cries of reproach were heard in every manufacturing town, and merciless invectives directed against those in power, for having at the close of the war offered such a sacrifice of popular industry, health, and comfort, in the hour of victory.

When Parliament met in January, Mr. Ponsonby moved an amendment to the Address declaring that the pressure of distress was graver than at the conclusion of any former war; but that to maintain the patience of the people it was incumbent on the House by a severe and vigilant exercise of its powers to prove to their fellow-subjects that the sacrifices it might be their painful duty to make were strictly limited to the real necessities of the State, and to express regret that measures of the most rigid economy had not hitherto been pursued.

Lamb "admitted that the noble Lord who had opened the debate, and the honourable gentleman who had seconded the Address, had in some points touched upon and explained with ability the state and prospects of the country; they had forcibly dwelt with exultation on the general state and situation of the realm, and in one of the topics of their gratulation he most fully concurred; he need not say that he alluded to the prompt undertaking and effective execution of the armament against Algiers. The honourable gentleman who seconded the Address had, however, carried his feeling of eulogium into a sort of poetical enthusiasm on this event; he had described it as a proof to the nations of the earth that there was nothing selfish in the policy of Great Britain towards other Powers; that her aid and co-operation were always in readiness to redress the injuries inflicted upon other States, and to relieve them in their hour of calamity. He was sorry to say that he could not concur in this unlimited panegyric, and

before the honourable gentleman who had framed it could have wound his mind up to such a pitch of affectionate credulity, he should have turned his eyes to the systems which England had revived in Europe, to the dynasties she had restored, and to the forms of government she had re-imposed. Had he done so, he would have had his answer as to the liberal and enlightened policy of our Ministers, in those of Spain and other nations, which they had raised from their ashes. Had the expedition to Algiers been undertaken on other grounds than those of national insult, he for one would not have concurred in its justification ; great as was the principle connected with its object, he could never consent to Quixotic projects upon this general scale. England was, and he trusted ever would be, capable of maintaining her own dignity, and the Commons House of Parliament, her just avenger, would ever assert her title to that uncompromising claim. There was certainly no triumph more pregnant with satisfaction, or calculated to excite more heartfelt gratitude, than that to which allusion had been made. It was to be hoped that our great object was, on that occasion, most fully and permanently secured. The experience, indeed, of past times forbade anything more decisive than the indulgence of a hope on such an occasion. He was satisfied that the conflict had been waged for a cause of whose justice there could exist no doubt, and that it had been conducted and terminated in the most efficient manner. It was greatly to the interest of England, and indeed of the human race, that the atrocious slave traffic should have been abolished. On no other part of the speech could he bestow the same unqualified approbation. One paragraph, which ascribed the present state of distress to the sudden termination of the war, was certainly founded upon a very unfair view of existing circumstances ; it was affixing to the end of the war that consequence which ought to be attached to its continuance. It was not its conclusion, but its long continuance, which had produced the effects which were then visible, and which might have been obviated by the adoption of a different course of policy. The war was the cause, and the distinct cause, of the present prevailing distress ; and if it should appear in any future investigation that an opportunity had been culpably lost of terminating that war, and of course with it a part of the public distress that was incidental to its continuance, then the culpability would attach to those who had ill discharged their duty, and who became thereby responsible for the distresses, the continuance of which they had caused. If, on the contrary, no fair opportunity had been lost of terminating the war, then the distresses which had arisen were unavoidable, and must be met by patience and forbearance. Our calamities had been produced by the war, though their complete pressure was not felt till the arrival of peace ; they were thus connected with the peace in point of time, but they could not be traced to the peace as their cause. In this situation the great object for us to pursue was, not to propagate a delusion with respect to the cause of our distress, but to take every means of alleviating it, or preventing its extension

by supporting and maintaining public credit. Some time ago the complaints against the landholder were as loud as they now were against the fundholder. These complaints were now heard no more, for there was no reason for them. Rents had been reduced, the landed interests were straitened in their incomes, but who had benefited by the change? The distresses of the manufacturing and labouring classes, instead of being alleviated, had been increased; they had been deprived of employment by the reduced circumstances of those who employed them, and found no advantage in the diminution of the income of those against whose wealth they clamoured. Any interference with the fundholder he was convinced would be productive of similar effects, instead of relieving our distress. Our situation should be supported with that firmness and patience that could alleviate every calamity, instead of leading us to attempt plans and expedients which might aggravate temporary sufferings into irretrievable ruin, by destroying entirely public confidence and national credit. But how were we to support public credit if we did not resort to such expedients? He would answer—by economy and retrenchment. Parliament, he hoped, was prepared for entering into economical reductions; ministers, he hoped, were prepared for the task; and the country, he hoped, was likewise prepared. He said, he hoped the country was prepared for it; for, although he meant no reflection against any particular individuals, he could not refrain from observing that those who now called for economy and retrenchment might be sorry that they were adopted. It should be recollected that retrenchment was not an unmixed good. A strict and rigorous attention to economy, and reduction of all our establishments to the lowest possible scale must be productive of evils to certain individuals, and he was not disposed to underrate their sufferings; but the national good and the public security were paramount to all other considerations. Our commercial situation and system required revision, after such a violent change as it had lately undergone in the political circumstances of the world. The whole should be taken into consideration, with the view of ascertaining whether the regulations which had guided it in war should be continued or altered on the return of peace. The House ought not to be deterred from its duty in adopting improvements and economical reforms, by the rumours or the fears of any disturbances or breaches of the peace which they either had heard or with which they were threatened. He allowed in their fullest extent the rights of the people to petition for any lawful object that they thought connected with their interests, privileges, or well-being; he revered popular meetings which were regularly and quietly conducted, he revered the rights and the privileges which they exercised, and he was disposed to attend to their representations, as much as any man; but when such assemblies proceeded to violence, when they led to breaches of the peace, he was for vigorous and immediate repression. This conduct he would recommend, not only from motives of public security, but from motives of tenderness and

mercy to the deluded persons themselves. He deprecated all breaches of the peace, disturbance and riot, not only for their immediate effects, but for their ultimate consequences. Tumult for liberty and right was not only dangerous and destructive, but was a liar, and never kept its promises. It led in the end, through scenes of anarchy and blood, to a political tyranny, or military despotism, the more fatal in its nature, and the more hopeless in its consequences, from the circumstance that the people were taught to seek refuge under its protection from the more appalling evils of insecurity and confusion."

Canning said :—

"An honourable gentleman, Mr. Lamb, who never spoke without making a deep impression by his eloquence and ability, truly observed that retrenchment is not an unmixed good. Such a process necessarily throws upon the world many meritorious and helpless individuals who are added to the numbers of the distressed and who augment the mass of discontent throughout the country. I state this not as an argument against reduction, but as an excuse for the frank avowal that in cutting deep it is impossible not to pain severely."

The amendment was lost by 264 to 112. The minority included Abercromby, Althorp, Brougham, Burdett, Ebrington, Mackintosh, Morpeth, Romilly, Tavistock, and Tierney.

Lord Cochrane presented a petition from Saddleworth, bitterly complaining of the neglect with which popular suffering was treated, declaring that no relief by way of charity would be of any use unless the grievances of the community were redressed by the concession of a thorough and comprehensive change, and averring that the existing House of Commons did not represent the nation. A question was raised as to whether such language ought to be tolerated by Parliament, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved that it be rejected. Lamb expressed his strong condemnation of the revolutionary language held at public meetings during the recess, and especially regarding universal suffrage and annual Parliaments :

"But they ought to remember the emphatic language of their Speaker, that their doors should be thrown wide open for the statement of grievances ; yet a line should be drawn : those petitions which denied the authority of that House and its power to make laws ought to be rejected, but the present petitioners did not go to that extent ; on the contrary, they fully admitted both those functions in their prayer that the House would be pleased to pass a bill for Parliamentary reform. The petition from Bristol just ordered to lie upon the table had prayed that the House would receive and pass a bill for that purpose. The bill was to be prepared out of doors, and they were to sit there to receive and pass it. That was the popular doctrine now with the gentlemen who had taken the subject of reform into their hands. They were to get the bill ready and send it to the House of Commons, as a mere formality, necessary to give it the effect of law. That doctrine reminded him of what took place at the end of the Civil War, when notions of a republic were generally dif-

fused. Serjeant Maynard and some of the old reformers who still retained an attachment to constitutional forms in the midst of all their republican zeal, proposed that a king should be elected for the purpose of giving the royal assent to bills ; but that all other functions and authority of royalty should be abolished. Upon the whole, he considered the petition as less objectionable than the former one which had been received, and therefore he hoped it would not be rejected."

Brougham and Canning took a similar view ; and forty-eight members voted accordingly ; but the amendment was rejected by a large majority.

Before venturing to propose measures of repression, the Executive resolved to take Parliament into its confidence, and to invite it to share its responsibility. A committee of secrecy was appointed to consider and report upon the information contained in certain sealed papers laid upon the table, which ministers believed would show an extent of seditious combination formidable to the safety of the realm. Opposition were invited to suggest names for the committee ; and although, according to precedent, the ultimate actual choice was determined by ballot in the whole House, every one being free to modify the list as he pleased, the choice for the most part confirmed the list mutually agreed upon behind the chair. With Mr. Ponsonby were thus associated Lord Milton, Mr. Elliot, Sir Arthur Pigott, Mr. Lamb, Sir J. Nicholl, and Mr. Dundas. And when at the beginning of the following session the committee was reappointed for a like purpose, Lord G. Cavendish and Mr. Wynn replaced Mr. Elliot and Mr. Ponsonby. Evidence in support of the depositions and reports from the Home Office was brought before this parliamentary court of inquiry to aid its scrutiny and to shape its judgment. It is of the nature of such a tribunal that its consultations should frequently take the form of argument, and that its decisions should be come to not without controversy. Without such conflict of views it would indeed be of little use. But precedents forbid a disclosure of the divisions which take place on a proposed report or on any of its recommendations. It would, indeed, be incompatible with the idea of secrecy were lists of the majority and the minority upon important questions publicly recorded, when the grounds for such difference are withheld. The part taken subsequently in debate by members of the committee on the bills founded on the report sheds, indeed, a partial light upon some of the questions which are supposed to have given rise to discussion with closed doors ; but a speech in a popular assembly will always essentially differ from the condensed and contentious arguments suited to a committee-room. Service on committees of importance, where a man of intellect really devotes time and care to the investigation, and tries to carry others with him, or to resist their powers of suasion, is a special training of the best and highest kind ; and few ordeals test more thoroughly the metal of which men are made.

For Lord Milton's amendment questioning the payment of war salaries to secretaries of the Admiralty during the expedition to Algiers,

Lamb spoke briefly but much to the purpose. The vote, however, was carried by 169 to 114 in a strictly party division.

On the third reading of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill, Lamb, as a member of the Secret Committee, was ready to bear his share of any odium that might be excited by measures founded on their report; but he believed the bill to be required by the exceptional state of things that unhappily prevailed. A minority of 103, including Abercromby, Brougham, Burdett, Duncannon, Ebrington, Folkestone, Lambton, Mackintosh, Romilly, Tavistock, Tierney, Ponsonby, Althorp, and Cavendish, voted against the third reading.

Three days before the fatal illness of Mr. Ponsonby, Lamb had differed from him in debate and division, and when he was gone he could not restrain his wish to pay a tribute of respect to the leader they had lost. He accordingly undertook the task of moving a new writ for Wicklow, prefacing the motion with a warm eulogy on the patience, temper, judgment, and urbanity of his deceased friend.

The plight of Opposition in 1817 was deplorable. Whigs and Radicals opposed one another, and no party chief succeeded to the authority of George Ponsonby, who for several years had filled the difficult post of leader. Tierney and Brougham were spoken of as qualified to replace him. In activity and versatility the latter was confessedly pre-eminent, but Tierney possessed temper, discretion, and standing in a far higher degree: and as he could be depended on to act loyally with the great Whig chiefs, they determined to have him for their representative in the Commons. In manner he was decidedly an improvement on his predecessor, whose bearing, haughty, cold, and repellent, aggravated the deficiencies of mind that came to him by nature. "He was the least eminent man," said Ward, "that ever filled such a station, and yet his loss was an event of considerable importance." But he was a man of independent means, of family connection, and of fidelity to his word. Tierney was in rather indifferent health, simply a soldier of political fortune, enterprising, clever, and a great swordsman in the wordy fray, but without a relative or follower in the ranks, and without decisive weight in counsel; for by birth he was nobody, and when he had lavished his wife's fortune on contested elections he was poor.

Lady Caroline continued still to write, regardless of the dissuasions of her friends, and this year was published her third novel, 'Ada Reis,' by some deemed her best. It was violently opposed to many prejudices of society, and had little attraction for ordinary readers. She herself regarded it with no little pride, and playfully urged a friend with whom she interchanged literary confidence to uphold it:

"All I have asked of Murray is a dull sale, or a still birth. This may seem strange, and I assure you it is contrary to my own feelings of ambition; but what can I do? I am ordered peremptorily by my own family not to write. All you say is true, and so true, that I ask you if one descended in a right line from Spencer, not to speak of the Duke of Marlborough, with all the Cavendish and Ponsonby blood to

boot, which you know were always rebellious, should feel a little strongly upon any occasion, and burst forth, and yet be told to hold one's tongue and not write, what is to happen? You cannot do me a greater favour than to recommend and set abroad ‘*Ada Reis.*’ I will send you three copies, and with them the letters I have received from Gifford, Lady Dacre, and several others whom you know. In the meantime I am doing all I can for your future work upon *Salvator Rosa*. I have received kind answers from the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Palmerston, and Lord Cowper, in which they say they will certainly obey your orders. You must wait, but depend on the information. Will you, in return for the three *Ada Reises*, which I value at sixpence apiece,—will you read the enclosed list, and serve me, if you can, by trying to secure me a vote in Westminster Hospital, in the case of a vacancy for a physician? It may not happen this year, and it may in a month. I am anxious to serve a physician whose name is Dr. Roe, and as we both love Ireland, let me speak it to the honour of that country, that he sprung from it. He has done everything he could for my dear and only child. I therefore have done, and will do, everything for him. It is Scotland, Ireland and England that are opposing each other. You know you are all-powerful with the Opposition, and I hope for Ireland you will do your best. I will do all I can for *Salvator Rosa*.”¹

Near the centre window of the drawing-room looking into St. James's Park, the chair long retained its place fastened to the floor in which Byron sat for his picture to Sanderson. Lady Morgan notes, in her diary, being received in this room with the Countess D'Ameland, who seems to have understood Lady Caroline's temper and manner, “more odd and amusing than ever. There was no kindness she would not take the trouble to devise for those who were in favour, but it was hazardous not to accept the offer.” Her song beginning “*Waters of Elle*,” written in the autumn of 1818, published with music, retained its popularity longer than most West-end ballads. She delighted in the harp, on which instrument she had attained considerable proficiency.

In consequence of a fall from her horse, Lady Caroline suffered, in December, from an attack of nervous fever, which seemed at one time like to prove fatal. Her own account of her recovery is too characteristic to be translated into other language than her own :

“For one week I never swallowed anything. The moment of danger is now passed, and I believe, in truth, I died ; for assuredly a new Lady Caroline has arisen from this death. I seem to have buried my sins, griefs, melancholy, and to have come out like a new-born babe, unable to walk, think, speak ; but perfectly happy. So, finding myself—after I had wished for death and died—alive again, I made them carry me out into the air in a blanket, and then, to the astonish-

¹ To Lady Morgan from Bocket Hall, undated, but obviously soon after the publication of ‘*Ada Reis.*’

ment of every one, ordered my horse next day, and sat upon it and would ride, and now am well, only weak. I have positively refused to take any draughts, pills, laudanum, wine, brandy, or other stimulants. I live upon meal-porridge, soda water, milk, arrowroot, and all the farinaceous grains. My mind is calm—I am pleased to be alive—grateful for the kindness shown me ; and never mean to answer any questions further back than the 15th of this month, that being the day of this new Lady Caroline's birth : and I hate the old one. She had her good qualities, but she had grown into a sort of female Timon—not of Athens—bitter, and always going over old, past scenes. She also imagined that people hated her. Now, the present Lady Caroline is as gay as a lark, sees all as it should be, not perhaps as it is ; and having received your very clever letter, full of good sense, means to profit by it ; but, at present, like her predecessor, and like one of your countrymen, is going about wanting work. I have nothing necessarily to do. I know I might, and ought to do a great many things, but then I am not compelled to do them. As to writing, assuredly enough has been written, besides it is different writing when one's thoughts flow out before one's pen, and writing with one's pen waiting for thoughts.”¹

For some time Lady Melbourne had been in declining health, and in March she was made aware that her end was approaching. Firm and collected to the last, she spoke to her children frequently of their inevitable separation, and counselled each apart, in her own way, as to what she believed best for them in life. Even at the gate of death she would not quench the torch of that ambition which had lighted her devious and audacious path for well-nigh fifty years ; but handed it to the son in whose destiny she believed, and bade him look high. Her parting words seem never to have lost the sharpness of their first impression. Her death took place on the 6th of April, 1818, at Whitehall, whence, on the 14th, her remains were removed for interment in the family vault in Hatfield Church. The chief mourners were Earl Cowper, and William and George Lamb. Frederick was not in England.

The loss of his mother proved, in many ways, a serious one to Lamb. Though she never could accomplish all she wished in his favour, she was to the last watchful for his interest and versatile in expedients to promote it. More than all, she was for him the safest and best of confidantes. Up to this time no avowed estrangement had taken place between husband and wife ; their pursuits were different, and their companions ; her whims and oddities multiplied ; and, as he could not cure, he resolved not to see them, or, when that could not be helped, not to remember them. He had reasoned himself into the conviction that the world knew very little about them, and that society held him in no way accountable for her unaccountabilities. No one but her immediate relations ever thought of talking to him on the subject. He continued, indeed, to be cherished and beloved by them

¹ From Brocket, December 18th.

all, for they knew how much he had to endure, and with what good-humoured fortitude he bore one of the greatest trials of a sensitive nature, that of being made ridiculous by her whom, of all others, he would have been proud and glad to see identified with himself in honour and esteem. What impatience and repining at the fate which bound him for life to a woman he had once ardently loved, and still was fervently attached to, when she was lovable, feminine, and tranquil, but who, by her waywardness and folly, every now and then outraged all his fastidious regard for conventionalities, and humiliated him in the eyes of the frivolous and tattling crowd : what struggles he had with himself to choke down resentment, and to adjourn indefinitely the half-formed resolve to break with her once and for all—we shall never know. From his mother he had few secrets ; none in domestic affairs. While she lived conjugal squabbles were more easily adjusted, or at least smoothed over ; for Lady Melbourne was in his opinion, and not in his alone, a person of rare insight into character, and she possessed a singular ascendancy over the impulses and tendencies of others. Affection for her daughter-in-law she probably had none. Had she been ever so beautiful, influential, or wise, the old lady would have warred to the death with a woman who had spoilt the happiness of her idolised son, if warring would do him any good. But she knew better. Long experience of the ways of the world taught her to give him other counsel. She was ambitious for him, and she knew that in the society in which they moved there was every species of danger and detriment in open separation. He was very handsome, very fascinating, and very susceptible. So long as the household was preserved, there was little risk of his falling a prey to wiles certain to beset him, if once the domestic bond were publicly and irreparably broken. Notwithstanding all her sympathy and aid, she knew that his pecuniary resources became every year less adequate to meet his personal wants, and the obligations unreasonably thrown upon him : these requirements would certainly be augmented heavily if he had to provide a separate establishment suitable for her who bore his name. He was in debt, but not yet to an extent that was formidable, even though the possession of his inheritance might be long deferred. But all this would speedily change for the worse if Lady Caroline should cease to have her home at Melbourne House, and designing persons once began to entangle him in the web of their enchantments. “Ah,” he used to say long afterwards, “my mother was a most remarkable woman ; not merely clever and engaging, but the most sagacious woman I ever knew. She kept me right as long as she lived.” It is not difficult to imagine, though impossible to tell, in how many little ways, and by what subtle arts, she contrived to quench sparks of contention, and to reconcile differences ere they gained head, to laugh ill-humour out of countenance, on either or both sides, ere it found angry words, and to create a diversion in favour of pleasure or peace when her intractable daughter-in-law seemed bent on mischief. The very presence of such a woman as Lady Melbourne, in her later years, was an insurance

against dangerous incompatibilities taking fire. And when that presence ceased nothing could supply its place.

At the general election of 1818 the greatest triumph of the Whigs was the return for Westminster of Sir Samuel Romilly by a large majority over Sir Murray Maxwell, for whom Lord Castlereagh and all the supporters of the Government voted,—and by a still greater preponderance over Mr. Henry Hunt, then the idol of the populace. Upon Romilly's unexpected death soon afterwards, candidates of various shades of liberal opinion presented themselves. The Westminster Committee that had mainly contributed to bring in Burdett in 1807, of which Mr. Adams, a wealthy coachbuilder in Long Acre, Mr. Francis Place, clothier, of Charing Cross, and Mr. Brook, glass manufacturer, of the Strand, were the most influential members, undertook to find him a colleague after his own heart, and gave their support to Mr. J. C. Hobhouse, then best known as the devoted friend and confidant of Byron. An appeal to the electors, written by Place, staking the issue upon the principle of radical reform, appeared to Jeremy Bentham, who was consulted daily on the subject, to be just the right thing; and was considered by Tierney and Brougham and Lord Robert Spencer as an insufferable affront to the Whig party. Hobhouse personally was known to all and liked by most of them; and he had the great merit of having a rich father who would spend any sum that might be necessary to carry Westminster. But that he should be returned in wanton defiance of the social and political influence that had theretofore been paramount was unendurable; and, come what might, a Whig must stand.

Neither Tory nor Radical at first appeared willing to take the field. At the instance of his brother William, who undertook the arduous work of organising a canvass of the most difficult, because the most spoiled, constituency in the kingdom, George Lamb agreed to become a candidate. A joint committee of Whigs and Radicals gave him their support. Representatives of the great family connection, all of whose mansions stood within the city, figured in the list as in the days of Charles Fox, and afterwards of Sheridan. Sir Francis, however, did not approve of the selection, and after some days promised his support to Hobhouse. He professed to be an advocate of household suffrage, triennial Parliaments, and ballot. But this did not content many who had supported Mr. Hunt, and they accordingly brought forward Major Cartwright, who outbid both his competitors by recommending that the suffrage should be universal, and that a new Parliament should be chosen every year. This it was supposed would decide the fate of the election by splitting the Radical party. Yet many circumstances conduced to render the event till the last moment doubtful.

In his address, George Lamb asked the suffrages of those who had lately returned Romilly, simply on the pledge of his adherence to the principles exemplified in the political career of that distinguished man, and these he promised to make the invariable guide of his public con-

duct.¹ Though little used to figure before a querulous and turbulent audience, he had acquired as an amateur actor some facility in elocution ; and his pleasant features and good temper won him as much favour as could be expected from the crowd. He parried questions meant to entangle him in his talk, with adroitness so as not to give offence, and steadily refused to be pushed beyond his promise to walk according to the liberal light as it had shone forth calmly in the votes and speeches of his illustrious predecessor. All the arts of female suasion were pressed into requisition on his behalf. The Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Melbourne were no more ; but their memory was recalled by Lady Georgiana Morpeth and Lady Caroline Lamb, both of whom succeeded in winning many doubtful suffrages. Among these they hoped to reckon William Godwin, then at the height of his literary fame, but whom neither of the fair canvassers had ever seen. The philosopher was supposed to be inaccessible to ordinary blandishments, and it was thought advisable to approach him deferentially. On the 25th of February he was rather surprised, but, as it would appear, rather more pleased, at receiving the following note :

"Lady Caroline Lamb presents her compliments to Mr. Godwin, and fears his politics will incline him to refuse her request of his interest for Mr. George Lamb. She hopes, however, it will not offend if she solicits it."

He replied without delay :

"You have mistaken me. Mr. G. Lamb has my sincere good wishes. My creed is a short one. I am in principle a Republican, but in practice a Whig. But I am a philosopher, that is a person desirous to become wise, and I aim at that object by reading, by writing, and a little by conversation. But I do not mix in the business of the world, and I am now too old to alter my course, even at the flattering invitation of Lady Caroline Lamb."

Thus began an acquaintance which in due time ripened into a literary friendship.

William Lamb, who never could be got to work energetically for himself at an election, threw all his energies into the struggle for his brother. His influence with moderate men among the ministerialists was personally considerable. Although no positive certainty could be had that at the last moment a Government candidate would not appear upon the scene, it grew less probable every day. Two votes had been taken a few days previously in the House of Commons giving an addition of £10,000 a year each to the Prince Regent and the Duke of York. Tierney had led the opposition to both, and had been supported by Scarlett, Denman, Wilberforce, and Brougham. Ministers were too well satisfied with their majority of more than one hundred in the new Parliament to embroil themselves in the Westminster election. Mr. M'Donald, who had recently made a very popular speech in the House of Commons, proposed the Whig candidate on the hustings.

¹ Address to Westminster, February 12th, 1819.

Hobhouse was proposed by Sir F. Burdett and seconded by the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird. Major Cartwright was proposed by Mr. Nicholson and seconded by Mr. Bowie, who thought Hobhouse did not go far enough. Lamb was at first ill received, but quickly gained a hearing ; rank and property sided with him against the democratic brewer. Out of 2763 votes polled for him, 1070 had been plumpers for Sir Murray Maxwell at the previous election some months before ; and the fact was flung at him subsequently by way of proof that he was at heart a ministerialist. Hobhouse was distanced by hundreds and Cartwright by thousands.

William Lamb was one of those who had followed Sheridan to the grave. His admiration was unbounded for his genius. He had never, indeed, heard him at his best ; and continually in his company during his latter years, he could not be unconscious of his foibles and his faults ; the after-glow of his fame, and the fascination of his talk even in the clouded period of his decline, were for so lenient a judge and so generous a critic irresistible. Tom Sheridan was, besides, his personal friend ; they were not far apart in age, and were closely knit by sympathy in taste and turn of thought. Ere many months had passed Lamb communicated to his friend the notion of becoming his father's biographer ; and as few things are pleasanter, and none easier, than to build in the air a monumental shrine to keep in remembrance one we have known and honoured, he persuaded himself that at last he had hit upon something in the shape of work that would be not only useful, but that would make him a name. Preliminary readings in Old English comedy from Beaumont to Congreve, were preparatory to writing the earlier portions of his work and delightful preparation it was. The more comparative study of orations, English, Irish, French, Roman, Greek, served to fix his taste and judgment in his predilection for the condensed and laconic over the diversified and diffuse. He liked the speeches in Livy, and still more those in Sallust and Tacitus, better than those of Cicero himself, who he was sure must have bored the Conscript Fathers, thinking a great deal more of their costly suppers than of the virtue of their predecessors ; but in his opinion the model of statesmanlike eloquence was to be found in the orations in Thucydides. Of the earlier Irish school he had little or no means of judging. Canning he could listen to for ever ; but the man who he always said was the most irresistible in argument he had ever heard was Plunket. By the time he had come to settle conclusions about all these, something of his youthful preference for Sheridan was shaken ; for he could not reconcile them with his unbridled freaks of fancy and tendency to over-decoration. This did not quench his biographic zeal, or abate his ambition to be the author of a book that every one would read. After many postponements and changes of design, he at length began, and actually wrote the introductory portions of the *Life of the orator* as we have it now.

But the drudgery of seeking out, and testing and winnowing the materials for a consecutive narrative stretching back into the days of

Garrick and Wilkes, was a reality for which his desultory studies and philosophisings had not the least prepared him. Repartees were easily remembered, and the number of nights that "The Rivals" and "The Critic" ran was chronicled to his hand in the records of Covent Garden ; but what put it into the dramatist's head to write as he did, how he managed to live while he was writing, and fighting to get his work properly played ; and then why he did not write on instead of turning aside into politics ; and why when he had made the greatest speech of his day and generation, and was offered a thousand pounds next morning if he would give a correct report of it, he would not, could not, or at all events did not, though he had not at the time a thousand pence to spare—all this thoroughly bewildered the intending biographer. He had got together all the best marbles and bronzes, sacrificial tools and incense-burners for his temple, but to go quarrying for the stones and digging out the rubbish for the foundation, or making the cement and trowelling it into the numberless interstices that must be filled up—Heigh-ho ! perhaps somebody else would do it better : why not Thomas Moore, an enthusiast by nature, a skilled workman by trade ? There was some hesitation and some demur : the poet instinctively knew that, professionally considered, it was not a job that would pay ; people would expect too much, and if for himself he was to forage for materials, they would find that they had got too little for their money. Yet if he did not perform that more laborious part of the work, for which an author gets no thanks and few traces of which are ever discernible at all, how was it to be done ? Moore was just then in the highest vogue, and the brilliant fragments of the great polisher and setter of intellectual diamonds were ten times more profitable, and a hundred times easier to supply than circum-spect and circumstantial biography of a man, half of whose associates and antagonists were still living. It was too late to detect many of the lies, and too soon to tell many of the truths about him. Moore was told by everybody he dined with that he was just the man to embalm Sheridan's memory in frankincense and myrrh. The Minstrel Boy liked the compliments better than the work, and took to it reluctantly. Lamb proffered him all the aid in his power, and sent him his notes and sketches, with the introductory chapters which only were written. Eventually they made their appearance, with little adaptation, at the beginning of Sheridan's Life.

CHAPTER VIII.

KNIGHT OF THE SHIRE

*Repressive legislation—Death of George III.—M.P. for Hertfordshire
—Proceedings against the Queen.*

THROUGHOUT the manufacturing districts, open-air meetings in favour of Radical Reform took place during the autumn. No breach of the peace occurred, and the local magistracy did not feel themselves called on to interfere until, upon the 16th of August, an assemblage estimated at seventy thousand persons, collected from various contiguous districts, met under the presidency of Mr. Hunt at Peterloo Fields near Manchester. The military formation of the converging columns as they marched to the rendezvous, and the exhibition of caps of liberty and flags with ominous inscriptions, above all the dreaded purpose of the demonstration, impelled the magistrates to order the yeomanry to disperse the multitude; and upon their getting helplessly entangled and wedged in by the people, a troop of hussars was called on to clear the ground. No resistance was offered, but in the confusion and terror which ensued many persons were severely injured, and six or seven killed. Ministers advised the Regent to thank the county justices for the promptitude of their loyalty and vigour in crushing sedition and preserving the peace; but on careful consideration, their legal advisers told them that the existing state of the law against popular manifestations was clouded with so much doubt that it was difficult to say what really constituted an abuse of the liberty of publication, of meeting, or of speech. Several measures of repression of the most stringent kind were thereupon prepared under the direction of Lords Sidmouth and Eldon; and Parliament was summoned to meet in November to confer upon them the validity of law. Before they were taken into consideration by the Commons, Lord Althorp moved for a select committee to inquire into the state of the country, with a view to ascertain the cause of the discontent and distress which had led to the recent manifestations of a desire for organic change. He was supported in debate by Douglas Kinnaird, Milton, Brougham, Duncannon, Tierney, and William Lamb, who said that:

“On reviewing all the circumstances of the case, he found it absolutely impossible to doubt that inquiry into what had taken place at Manchester ought to be immediately instituted. This was necessary for the character of the magistrates themselves. To the argument which seemed to be principally relied on, that a Parliamentary inquiry would prejudice proceedings about to take place in a court of justice, he would reply that, in a case of national importance, this was an inconvenience that must be submitted to. In the next place, he would remark, that he knew of no pending prosecution that would bring the whole case before

any of the ordinary tribunals ; and for himself he would say, that in his opinion nowhere could so impartial an investigation of the circumstances take place as in a committee of that House. If it were admitted that the magistrates had acted legally, still an important political question must arise on the discretion which they had exercised, and this made a Parliamentary investigation desirable. He was apprehensive that coercive measures, in the present state of the country, would prove injudicious, and was afraid that more meetings like that at Manchester might be expected if something was not done to conciliate and tranquillise the public mind. A measure, he understood, was to be brought forward by an honourable friend of his, the object of which was to effect a reform in Parliament. He should be ready to support it if he thought its provisions were good. He had hitherto objected to the plans of the advocates for Parliamentary reform, because he thought them not calculated to effect their object, and tending to degrade rather than to improve the representation of the people. He should certainly vote for the motion."

It was rejected, however, by 323 to 150 ; a preponderance by which, with little variation of relative numbers, the whole of the six Acts were passed. Throughout the controversy the Grenvillites aided ministers, and on one critical occasion Plunket's voice rallied many waverers and, it was believed, saved them from defeat. Lord Grey brooked ill being thwarted by any who had ever acted with him. He spoke angrily of the veteran statesman with whom he had so long been associated, and he was said to have written in offensive terms to a friend in Ireland of the conduct of Plunket. But the intervention of Lord Lansdowne, who had better temper than either, reconciled the differences, ere they had become public, between Plunket and Grey.¹

The new year opened in political and social gloom. Industry sought in vain an adequate price for its produce ; labour failed to win enough of bread, and enterprise looked round with languid gaze. Political repression was beginning to bear fruit in seditious plots. Early in the winter Lord Sidmouth had information of designs to overthrow the Government by means of a sudden outbreak in the capital, to be responded to by armed risings in the manufacturing towns. The agencies of espionage were forthwith redoubled. The Home Office tightened the cords of rigour, and loosened the purse-strings of reward for the betrayal of crime. But perjury grew faster than prevention ; and dark promises of discovery ended for the most part in discovering nothing. Late on the 29th of January the tolling of the great bell of St. Paul's announced that George III. had passed away. For eight years the Regent had exercised all the powers of royalty, and henceforth he would enjoy the long-coveted name. At the Privy Council on the morrow he appeared to be unwell, and ere

¹ Plunket to Sir John Newport, January 9th, 1821. Lansdowne to Plunket, January 24th, 1821.

he could be proclaimed, his physicians confessed themselves uneasy at symptoms of acute inflammation. Both Houses of Parliament assembled, according to law, for the purpose of taking the necessary oaths ; and adjourned until after the royal funeral. For several days George IV. was thought to be in imminent danger ; as if death, having mocked him with the gift of a crown, was lurking near to make away with it again. He had not yet, however, wasted wholly the natural strength of his constitution, and the malady yielded by degrees. His first act on being reassured of life was to desire the Premier to prepare without delay a bill of divorce against the Queen, and his next to command the Archbishop of Canterbury to omit the prayer for her in the Liturgy. Doctor Howley meekly complied : Lord Liverpool refused to obey. The King was wroth, and peremptory in the iteration of his commands. The Cabinet met, adjourned and met again ; submitted reasons as to the impolicy and deprecations of the scandal necessarily attendant on such a precipitate act : and finding expostulation fruitless they resigned. No set of public men could be found to take their place on condition of giving the pledge they had refused, and his Majesty, sore against his will, consented to the question being left in abeyance so long as the Queen should remain abroad. Lord Liverpool engaged, on the other hand, to institute parliamentary inquiry into her conduct if she should return to England. In the midst of these discussions Lord Sidmouth received warning that an attempt was maturing by a few desperate men upon the lives of ministers. The sanguinary deed was to be perpetrated on the 23rd of February at Lord Harrowby's house, where the Cabinet were to dine. The dinner was postponed ; Thistlewood and his gang were surrounded at their rendezvous in Cato Street, and eventually brought to trial, found guilty, and executed. Parliament was kept together long enough to vote the new civil list ; but men's thoughts were busy with preparations everywhere for the general election.

It was during the session of 1819 that Canning, in a bantering speech against parliamentary reform, was betrayed into the use of personalities which regard for the dignity of debate and for his own high reputation would have equally forbidden. They escaped at the time with a protest from Lambton, which had little effect ; but, stirring the wrath of the Rota Club, where advanced Liberals like Douglas Kinnaird, Sir Robert Wilson, Burdett, and Bickersteth periodically dined, it provoked a reply in the shape of a pamphlet which attracted no little attention. Canning, whose foibles it rudely exposed, ascribed it to the pen of Sir Philip Francis : it was really from that of Hobhouse. Success tempted him to try his hand again in reply to Lord Erskine, whose views did not differ materially from those of Canning. He assailed in unmeasured terms the whole system of representation as it then existed ; and asked the question, "What prevents the people from marching to the House, pulling the members out by the ears, locking the door and flinging the key into the Thames ? Knightsbridge Barracks !" This was brought to the notice of the House by Mr.

Courtney,¹ and after brief debate was voted a false, scandalous, and seditious libel. The publisher having given up the author, he was sent to Newgate by ninety-eight to sixty-five votes.

Next to being a victor the best thing was to be a victim. The Rota drank his health up-standing with all the honours ; and the Radical Committee were more proud than ever of their man. Hobhouse received no end of visitors, and lived as well as usual on what he called the wrong side of Temple Bar.

George Lamb had not been able during the session of 1819 to allay the discontent of the Radicals in Westminster. He had voted sometimes with the Government, sometimes with his colleagues, and sometimes not at all. His speech in support of Burdett's motion for parliamentary reform was stigmatised as half-hearted, because he thought, as many earnest Liberals of the period did, that any general measure of change was then unattainable, and because he offered to vote for the gradual transfer of seats from boroughs found to be corrupt to populous counties and towns. Sir Francis, amid professions of personal regard, rated him for his Whig caution, and complained that his backing was akin to that ridiculed by Falstaff.

"If we were all sure of attaining the age of Methuselah, we might, by possibility at least, hope to see some good effected in this manner before we died ; but in our circumscribed sphere of existence to entertain such a hope from such a source would be as absurd as for any parliamentary reformer to vote for a candidate who entertained such puerile ideas on the subject."²

Nor was the knotted lash of Cobbett sparingly laid upon him. Stoutly advocating the claims of the rival whom it was resolved to bring forward again, he revelled, as was usual with him, in alternate scolding and banter.

"If you, electors, belong to that indecisive, vacillating class of mere wishers, mere grumblers, hair-splitters, and oppositionists, who are satisfied with representatives, who sit out a debate in silent admiration of the wax candles and the Speaker's wig, and finish with voting in a hopeless minority,—then indeed I shall not attempt to influence your choice. Take, if you please, this Mr. Lamb, this yearling of the flock which Tierney folds ; make him your pet, your House Lamb : but for your cause, gentlemen, if by that word I understand your property, your liberty, and your national character, I fear that in the hands of Mr. Lamb your cause will be lost mutton."

Meanwhile, Hobhouse lay in Newgate, whither he had been sent on a Speaker's warrant for a libel on the House of Commons. Brougham and others would have dissuaded George Lamb from offering himself again for Westminster ; and he was not disinclined to follow their advice. Sir Robert Wilson on his behalf communicated with the local leaders early in February, disclaiming any wish to cause useless

¹ Afterwards Earl of Devon.

² Address to the electors of Westminster, February 25th, 1820.

division, and intimating that the Whigs would stand by and look on if they could be sure that the Radicals would not abuse the concession by crowing over them. Service, who was prominent amongst them, readily accepted the proposal for his own part, and assured him he might depend on Place behaving handsomely. Hobhouse, whom Lamb had visited in prison, hoped to avoid a contest, and plied his adherents with suggestions to that end ; amongst the rest, that one thousand signatures should be promptly obtained for a banquet to be given him on the day he was liberated by the dissolution. This he thought would have a decisive effect on the minds of the rest of the constituency. Government, full of internal distraction and despondency little understood out of doors, renounced all thoughts of contesting Westminster ; and certain of their friends signified their intention to support any moderate Liberal who might stand. In a family conclave at Melbourne House it was unwisely resolved to try the issue of another contest ; and the constituency, being then far smaller than it is now, the first foot-fall of canvassing was speedily overheard by the watchful ears of rivalry. Hobhouse, from his not unendurable dungeon in the City, wrote to his friend at Charing Cross :—

“George Lamb positively starts ; some Whigs have made efforts to prevent him, but he will try. I do not think that anything public should be done yet. The later the canvassing is delayed the better for us ; it will be in our favour if we wait until all the great folks are out of town,¹ as they must be speedily in their various counties.”

After another fortnight of preparation, the addresses of the three candidates appeared ; and as William Lamb's return for Hertfordshire was not to be opposed, he devoted himself for some weeks to the Westminster election.

On the 9th of March the contest began. G. Lamb was accompanied to the hustings by his brother, and was nominated by Mr. Wishart, and seconded by Mr. Evans, of Pall Mall, both supporters of Romilly and Burdett. He offered his hand to Hobhouse, who took it cordially, but he wholly failed to gain a hearing. The multitude were all for Hobhouse and Burdett, and rapturously cheered their liberated champion. Hobhouse complained that G. Lamb had upbraided him with the publication for which he had been incarcerated, and reproached him with having had in 1819 the support of those who voted against Sir. S. Romilly and for Sir Murray Maxwell. He therefore called him the ministerial candidate. This justified him in opposing one who had shown no active sympathy with the cause of the people. He acknowledged that his rival had visited him in Newgate, then why should he reproach him with the sentiments for uttering which he had been sent thither ? George Lamb justified himself by saying that sympathy for a friend whose political indiscretion had brought him into trouble was not inconsistent with reprobation of language all reasonable men condemned. He was not afraid to stand by an

¹ Letter from J. C. Hobhouse, February 11th, 1820, MS.

honourable man even when he thought him in the wrong ; but he did not expect to find his having done so made the occasion of a taunt.

While the event was pending, Sir Francis was compelled to attend the assizes of Leicester, as defendant in the trial of an *ex officio* information filed by the Attorney-General against him for a seditious libel on the Government regarding the Manchester massacre. Sir W. D. Best tried the case ; and the jury, under his direction, found for the Crown. The issue of the Westminster election five days after was taken as the popular reversal of the verdict, and Sir Francis was more the idol of the multitude than ever. When the conviction at Leicester was known in town, a placard appeared in these terms :—

“Electors of Westminster, Burdett has been convicted. Hasten to the poll, and show by your votes how you love and venerate him.”

The *Morning Post* observed that as probation in a jail was evidently preferred to probation in Parliament, and as conviction of a crime was sufficient warranty for Westminster suffrages, to have two convicted libellers at once was evidently a great “hit,”—and the chance of having one out of prison at a time might add much to the perfection of Radical representation.

The friends of Government stood aloof generally, only a few, from personal regard, recording their votes. Burdett was returned by 5,327, Hobhouse by 4,882, while Lamb polled but 4,436 votes. George Lamb, however, did not long remain without a seat, being returned for Dungarvan, then a close borough of the Duke of Devonshire's, in the room of Captain (afterwards Sir Augustus) Clifford, who had been appointed to a frigate under orders for the Mediterranean. Whatever ill-humour the Westminster contest occasioned, the rival candidates did not quarrel, and Hobhouse continued to visit at Melbourne House as before.

Government were thought to have rather gained strength by the new elections ; and Castlereagh continued still to lead the Commons ; while Opposition lost soon afterwards by the death of Grattan, one of its most venerated chiefs. The first session of the new Parliament proved singularly barren of good fruit. Sir J. Mackintosh, on whom Romilly's legislative mantle had descended, succeeded in carrying two bills abolishing capital punishment for a number of minor offences,¹ notwithstanding the fears of Lord Eldon that small tradesmen would be ruined if shoplifters to the value of five shillings were not hanged. But the peers, by his advice, rejected the mitigation of punishment in the case of poachers, who blackened their faces at night ; and Lamb found with regret that other humane clauses, in which he had supported his friend, must be abandoned.

Public attention unhappily reverted to the liturgical scandal caused by omitting the name of the Queen. Conjecture was busy as to the course she would pursue ; and many who pitied the misfortunes of her early wedded life, and who would fain have saved her from exposure

¹ 4th June, 1820.

and ignominy, advised that she should be left the undisputed possession of her rank, and given an allowance sufficient to maintain it, with a view to her residing permanently abroad. But the reckless and lawless omission of her name in the service of the Church was an insult hard to bear ; and the orders sent to ambassadors at foreign courts to disown her claim as Queen Consort, and to deprecate her recognition by the Governments to which they were accredited, filled the cup of provocation to the brim. The rights and privileges of a Queen Consort had long been established and defined ; and that which had been hitherto observed as an assurance the most solemn of her dignity as Princess of Wales was the coupling her name in the Book of Common Prayer with that of her husband. While his father lived, this had been uniformly done.

"Very properly," says Lord Campbell, "it was directed that Caroline should no longer be prayed for as Princess of Wales, and very improperly that a new form of prayer for the Royal family should be used from which her name was entirely excluded."

It was worse than idle to argue that in the Sovereign, as temporal head of the Church, is vested a discretion, for the use of which he cannot be called in question. Irresponsibility might with equal freedom, but with equal folly, be pleaded for his sending *congé d'élire* to a dean and chapter to nominate a dotard or blasphemer bishop of their diocese ; or for any other act of arbitrary caprice tending to subvert the ecclesiastical system established by law. A constitutional Monarch does not so trifle with his prerogatives. He knows that they are public trusts, not personal privileges ; and that to be preserved, they must be exercised not only with decorum, but in the spirit of exalted equity. To bid the nation on its knees, brand with scorn an absent woman, unconvicted by law of any crime, and against whom no charge had ever been preferred in any public tribunal, was not only immoral, because ruthless and vindictive, but unconstitutional in the highest degree, as condemning the desolate and oppressed unheard. A secret commission to gather evidence of the Queen's alleged misconduct had in the preceding year been sent to Milan, and such of the Cabinet as had perused its report might feel persuaded of her guilt. Canning refused to break the seal of the copy sent to him, and returned it, saying—

"He would not give any countenance to the notion that he acquiesced in a procedure he so thoroughly condemned. Let her be impeached of treason, if treason could be proved. Let her be put away publicly by the highest court of the realm, as one who had forfeited her right to share the throne. But until convicted and condemned, she was entitled, like every other subject of the realm, to be deemed innocent ; and to prejudge her cause by royal authority was to insult a defenceless woman, to violate the first fundamental principles of law, and seriously to compromise the Crown."

Unhappily for George IV., Canning stood alone ; and finding his position in the Cabinet untenable, he resigned the Board of Control.

Beside the members of Opposition, many independent supporters, like Lord Wellesley and Mr. Ward, shared these views, and in a short time the current of public opinion set in strongly in the same direction. Before leaving Italy, Queen Caroline appointed Mr. Brougham and Mr. Denman her Attorney and Solicitor General ; and made known through various channels her resolution to return to England. Thenceforth his Majesty would listen to no sound advice. In common with nearly all his friends, both Whig and Tory, Lamb deplored the infatuation of the King and the evils which it was too obvious would ensue from a public trial. Few were less disposed than he was to wound the pride of the new Monarch, or to yield to what he felt to be popular illusions as to the character and conduct of his wife. Living in the circle where all she said and did from the time of her marriage was known, he paid little regard to the plausible extenuations of her reckless and unseemly behaviour. But he had no confidence that, once embarked in a judicial investigation so unusual, and for which Parliament was so ill qualified, justice would really be done. Bills of divorce were, after all, in his opinion, clumsy and coarse expedients for releasing injured parties from an intolerable bondage. They had grown into use in comparatively modern days ; and the practice, even where the public in general hardly listened or looked on, and something of the proprieties of a high court of equity were observed, was not free from serious objection. Sometimes peers who had heard but half the case voted on the third reading of a divorce bill. Sometimes the decision was practically left to the Chancellor and the other law lords. But the Commons, obeying with singular forbearance a wise instinct of justice, had almost invariably abstained from discussing the merits of such bills. His mind revolted at the prospect of the opposite course being pursued, as it would be inevitably, were a measure introduced to dissolve the royal marriage. Even in the Upper House, it would be impossible, under the circumstances, to dissuade the great body of the peers from voting ; and the scenes that were likely to occur in the Lower House filled his imagination with disgust and dismay. He had many an anxious conference on the subject with Brougham, who was a constant visitor at the house of his younger brother. Lord Ellenborough had desired her Majesty's Attorney-General, on the first day of Easter Term, to take the precedence to which he was officially entitled in Court ; and his friends were delighted for his sake at the professional prominence the otherwise valueless distinction gave him. But they were not without fears that his besetting love of notoriety might blind him to some of the worst consequences of the struggle that seemed impending. With his energy, versatility, and eloquence, to lead in a suit between King and Queen in the High Court of Parliament, with the nation for an audience, was a temptation hardly possible to resist ; yet Lamb, who understood him well, and saw him daily, always acquitted him of blame in the transaction ; and though part of his conduct remained unaccounted for, no one ever accused him of misusing his influence to

draw the unhappy Princess needlessly or hastily into the struggle. She did not, indeed, disguise at first her misgivings of the thoroughness of his devotion to her cause. She considered him to incline, in point of fact, too much towards compromise; and she would have superseded him in favour of Sir James Scarlett, had he been willing to accept the charge.

Great efforts were made to dissuade her from returning to England; and at one time it was hoped that they might prove successful. On the indiscreet persons about her, who naturally wished to exchange the insignificance of a fourth-rate household at Rome, for the luxury and splendour of an English Court, was laid the blame of her ultimate decision. But her Majesty was not in reality swayed by them, or by any feeling or opinions save her own. Impulsive, vain, ill-educated, and unscrupulous—the best advisers would probably have failed to turn the most wilful of women from her purpose. She had cleverness enough to know that she could make herself intolerable, if not formidable, to the husband who had deserted, wronged, and insulted her. She sought reparation for private injuries, revenge for public affronts; and the opportunity had come. In her six years' exile she had outlived all remains of self-respect, and shrunk not therefore from discussions fraught with indelicacy and shame. Even before quitting England in 1814, she had ceased to be regarded with respect by those of her court whose consideration was best worth having; and all that had been told of her by general rumour since tended still further to lower her in estimation. On landing at Dover, early in June, she was saluted, it was said, through mistake, by the guard; and she was greeted with enthusiastic cheers by the crowds awaiting her from afar and near. In a womanly and courageous appeal to the nation, without a word of reflection on her husband, she called for justice and demanded the recognition of her rights. Her progress was a series of triumphs, and the middle and working classes in London received her with rapturous welcome. The rage of George IV. could hardly be controlled. He went in state the same day to Westminster, and upon retiring sent a message to both Houses directing inquiries to be made forthwith touching the conduct of the Queen. The evidence had been long preparing, and, in a sealed bag, was laid on the table of the Upper House by Lord Liverpool, on that of the Lower House by Lord Castlereagh. The Lords adjourned in silence till the morrow. The anger of the Commons burst into a flame not to be extinguished for several months to come.

Who and what was her accuser? The question was paramount to all others in the popular mind, and troubled, above all others, the legal advisers of her adversary. The right of recrimination had always been admitted in proceedings for divorce; and to set up a new and exceptional practice at variance with established law, would, it was felt, destroy all semblance of consistent justice. Technically, the Chancellor satisfied himself that a distinction might be drawn sufficiently plain to warrant a refusal of proof that his Majesty's

conduct disentitled him to relief from the nuptial tie. Ordinary bills for dissolution of marriage were always founded on the petition of the party complaining, who was treated throughout as a plaintiff in a suit. In that capacity he was liable to retaliation ; and if his hands were not clean he was refused redress. But the King had not petitioned, could not therefore be called a plaintiff, and was not consequently liable to counter charges. Infidelity by a queen consort was by old statute-law high treason ; but it could not be alleged that any corresponding crime could be committed against the state by a King ; and therefore the analogy failed.¹ These specious distinctions might satisfy a majority of the Upper House ; but who would guarantee that the fundamental principles of criminal equity would be put in abeyance, out of regard to distinctions so special and formal, by a majority of the House of Commons ? Lord Essex used to tell how George III., about to mount his horse for a morning ride, noticed that the heir apparent, whom he desired to accompany him and who stood uncovered by his side, wore a wig, and he asked sharply why he did so ; the Prince replied, "that he found himself subject to take cold, and that he had been advised by his physician to take this precaution." His Majesty turned to the lord-in-waiting, and said, "A lie ever ready when it's wanted." And if once the controversy were opened, who would set limits to the suggestions and imputations likely to be made ? The dissolute life led by George IV. subsequently to his marriage was simply notorious ; he had never taken any pains to conceal his excesses of any kind ; and there lay in ambush, hardly concealed, a charge against him which, if brought forward publicly in debate, could not there be set at rest, and which directly affected the validity of his title to the crown. He was said to have previously married Mrs. Fitzherbert, and she was still alive. Relying on his solemn word of honour, Charles Fox had undertaken to deny the fact ; but finding that he had been duped, he addressed to the Prince reproaches without precedent or parallel in the history of scorn ; and when Lord Grey was asked to patch up matters by saying something in Parliament about misapprehension of meaning on the part of Fox, he peremptorily refused. The documents connected with the transaction remain to this day in a box which cannot be opened without the consent of parties never likely to agree in the breaking of the seals.

From the day that, to obtain a grant to pay debts, the denial referred to was given to Parliament, distrust of the royal veracity never could be stilled. It came at length to be regarded by courtiers and statesmen as a matter which it was idle to discuss ; and anecdotes innumerable were told illustrating the universality of the impression. When Regent, he once called on Lady Spencer to ask her to do him a great service. He wished her to choose a person of attainments and accomplishments to be governess to the Princess Charlotte.

¹ Private letter of Lord Eldon to his brother, September, 1820.

Above all things, he desired that the lady should teach his daughter to tell the truth. Lady Spencer betrayed by the expression of her features what was passing in her mind. On which his Royal Highness observed, "You know I don't speak the truth, and my brothers don't, and I find it a great defect, from which I would have my daughter free. We have been always brought [up badly ; the Queen having taught us to equivocate ; and I want you to help me in the matter."

Negotiations for a compromise, conducted by the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh on one side, by Mr. Brougham and Mr. Denman on the other, led to nothing. Queen Caroline would have consented to live abroad if her regal station were recognised by the Austrian or Sardinian Government at the instance of our own, and if her name were restored in the Liturgy. The King refused ; and the proceedings in both Houses were resumed. Mr. Wilberforce made a despairing attempt to induce the Queen to waive her pretensions, and confide implicitly in the honour and discretion of Parliament. An address to this effect was carried against the Opposition ; Althorp, Brougham, Duncannon, J. Russell, Mackintosh, Whitbread, Scarlett, Graham, Tierney, Denman, and W. Lamb voting in the minority. George Lamb did not vote. As this was hardly a question on which difference of opinion among persons on the same side might not be reasonably entertained, it was regarded as decisive of the course which each individual who voted had made up his mind to take in the controversy. On the 3rd of July a select committee of the Lords reported that a *prima facie* case had been established against the Queen ; and on the following day Lord Liverpool introduced a bill of pains and penalties depriving her of the title, prerogative, rights, and privileges of Queen Consort ; and declaring that her marriage should be dissolved. Discussions on the mode of procedure, examination of witnesses, and arguments of counsel occupied many weeks, to the great detriment of public morals, and serious damage to the authority and reputation of Government. At length, on the 6th of November, after a debate of four days, the second reading was carried by 123 to 95 ; ministers and other holders of office at the will of the prosecutor voting in the majority, and more than sixty of their usual supporters declining to give it their support.

Public impatience overflowed at the announcement that, after a decision which was virtually equivalent to defeat, the bill was to be passed through a committee without a day's delay. The conscience of Lord Liverpool staggered beneath its burthen ; and he suffered this further stage to be completed before attempting to make a stand. But in the Cabinet, on the evening of the 9th, he proposed that the bill should be withdrawn. Lord Eldon stoutly resisted its abandonment, and sharp words were exchanged between the Chancellor and the Premier. By way of compromise it was resolved to feel again the temper of the House ; and to move the third reading on the following day. An exciting debate was concluded by a speech of the Duke of Bedford, who declared upon his honour that he believed the Queen

had falsely been accused. The majority of one hundred and twenty-three was found to have dwindled to one hundred and eight, and the minority to have increased to ninety-nine. It was clear that to send such a bill to the Commons, disowned by more than half the unsalaried peers who had voted, would be vain; and it was therefore withdrawn.

In the final division nearly all the friends and relatives of Lamb were told against the prosecution of the Queen, Devonshire and Bedford, Egremont and Spencer, Besborough and Fitzwilliam, Lansdowne and Grey, Holland and Cowper, contributed to secure the only result which in the existing state of national feeling was desirable or safe. In the great reputation won by Brougham during the protracted trial Lamb heartily rejoiced; for he admired intensely the self-reliant courage, untiring energy and inexhaustible versatility of the man; nor could his keen perception of his volatility, or distrust of his overweening egotism, quench the sympathy he felt for one in whose company he took infinite pleasure, and even in controversy with whom he felt his own powers quickened into a higher life. It was at this period that the great intimacy began, which continued so many years uninterrupted, and the kindly memories of which no mere political breach could obliterate. Yet he was glad that the name he expected some day to inherit was not recorded among those who by their votes condemned the conduct of the King. At seventy-five, it could not be expected that Lord Melbourne should endure the excitement and exhaustion of sitting as a judge for thirty consecutive days on a state trial. With what feelings the old man learned the progress of the affair, it were worse than vain to surmise. Although he had retired from his place in the household, it was impossible for him to forget the confidence so long reposed in him. Beneath a tranquil bearing and impassive mien, one can well believe there ebbed and flowed memories of bygone days ill suited to the equanimity of mind becoming a juror in a suit brought by his Sovereign. For once, infirmity and age were felt to be beneficent; for they exonerated him obviously, in the eyes of himself and of all others, from the duty of forming or pronouncing judgment. He had known George IV. too early and too well, and yet he had received unnumbered marks of favour from him, the last being the coronet he wore. Upwards of one hundred and sixty peers shunned the scene of shame; assigning as varied pretexts as the unworthy guests in the Gospel who when bidden would not come. But with the venerable recluse at Bocket it was not necessary to make excuse; for enfeebled strength was too deeply written on his brow. And all who loved or cared for him rejoiced that he should be left undisturbed in his tranquillity.

Not so easy or so clear seemed to be the course which the subject of these memoirs had to pursue. Thinking as he did of the conduct of the unhappy Queen, and regarding as blind infatuation the fervour of popular passion on her behalf, he felt daily more and more the humiliation which Parliament and the country had been subjected to

by her. He believed that indignation at the way in which she had been treated by her husband during fourteen years of provocation, was at the bottom of the hatred and fury manifested by all ranks in her defence. A man who could so illuse and insult his wife had no chance of a fair hearing from the people, whatever her frailties might be. The question was not, was she true, but, was he not false? Notwithstanding the imputations which every hour were publicly reiterated in the Government orders, she had the ineffable folly to bring in her carriage with her to the House of Lords the boy whom she said she had adopted, but about whom no satisfactory account could be given; and the mob shouted as she passed, "God bless your Majesty and your innocent child." Blatant absurdity was but the vulgar echo of more decorous and grave incoherency. It was, and could not but be, lamentable in the eyes of sensitive and honourable men. On the other hand, was it compatible with public courage or with public duty to stand aside on the plea of mere disgust? All the resources of espionage and menace, of vilipending and invective, of party organisation and Court influence, had been tried, and they had failed. The Bill of Pains and Penalties was abandoned in despair. A worthless, wayward, and as her own counsel believed, demented woman was become the darling of the populace, the balcony idol of a turbulent faction, and the heroine of millions of honest folk who knew but half the truth. Her partisans gave out that she intended to insist on being crowned in Westminster Abbey along with her loving lord. What she might attempt or do neither she nor anybody else could tell. It was only clear that her name was a signal and her presence an incentive to mischief and confusion. With very few exceptions, women of rank and station could not be induced to visit her. She resented bitterly their abstention, and had even thoughts, it was said, of displacing Lord and Lady Hood, who had unflinchingly adhered to her throughout the trial, with a view to identify her cause more distinctively with the classes that had welcomed her. The prospect was dismal in the extreme for all who wished a speedy end of disreputable controversy and the return of national attention to healthful and useful subjects of consideration.

Parliament adjourned for the Christmas recess, and ere it met again Lamb was one of many who had made up their minds that, under all the circumstances, the best policy lay in seeking to assuage every reasonable cause of irritation, and at the same time encouraging the Government to provide a liberal establishment for the Queen. Without ostensible grievance, it was hoped that the frenzy of the hour would cool, and that people would grow tired of her melodramatic cravings for applause. Appeals, public and private, were made to ministers to correct the initiatory error they had committed in the preceding year. On the 26th of January the member for Herts voted in a minority of 209 against 310 upon Lord Archibald Hamilton's motion for the restoration of the Queen's name to the Liturgy; on the 13th of February he was one of 178 who divided against 298 on the

motion of Mr. Smith of Norwich to the same effect ; and on Lord Tavistock's subsequent resolution condemnatory of ministers for the course they had pursued, he voted with the same number against 324.

George IV. did not dissemble his anger at these reiterated protests against his implacability. Folkestone and Althorp, Milton and Burdett did not surprise him ; but he was mortified at the votes of Cavendish, and vexed with those of Lamb. It was manifestly not the interest of the Whigs to rekindle his resentment. He made no secret of his discontent with Lord Liverpool, whose place he had more than once offered in vain to Castlereagh. They had begun to estimate the chances of a break-up in the administration, and to reconcile personal differences that might stand in their way if called upon to take the government ;¹ and politicians long excluded from power are seldom given to reprimanding the personal errors of the Court. Did their pertinacity in asserting their opinions in this affair of the Liturgy turn the scale of royal pique once more in favour of their rivals ? We know not, and probably shall never know. It is only certain that ministers held on, in spite of their unpopularity, without any change, while the Queen lived ; that what was called a policy of conciliation was devised for Ireland, to be inaugurated by a royal visit, and carried into effect by Lord Wellesley's appointment as Viceroy, with Plunket for Attorney-General ; that Canning was at any price to be sent beyond sea ; and that Grey and his friends were to be shown his Majesty could do without them.

CHAPTER IX.

BEGINNING OF THE END.

George IV. and the Whigs—Plunket's plea for religious liberty—Lambton's motion for reform—Catholic Peers Bill—Death of Castlereagh—Canning leader at last—Advice to Ward—Literary friends.

GRATTAN on his death-bed had bequeathed the charge of the Catholic question to the most faithful and eloquent of his disciples ; and for its sake had bidden his son forgive, even as he had forgiven, the greatest of his former foes. Plunket and Castlereagh mourned alike his loss ; and promised one another to persist in the assertion of his principles of religious liberty unto the end. And to the end both kept their word.

¹ Lansdowne to Plunket, January 24th, 1821.

Early in the session Plunket, as Attorney-General for Ireland, brought in the Relief Bill in a shape somewhat different from that of former years, but in all essential points the same ; and on the second reading spoke as even he had never spoken before. Peel, who as leader of the party of resistance had to reply, told Henry Bulwer many years afterwards, that it was the finest speech he ever heard. Canning, over-sanguine, heard in it the trumpet note of approaching triumph. Mackintosh went home to dream that he had heard Demosthenes. Lamb's delight was unspeakable. Thenceforth Plunket's opinion had greater weight with him on Irish affairs than that of any other man ; and to this must in some degree be ascribed the deflection of his course from the straight and narrow way of Whiggery for several ensuing years.

A motion of Mr. Lambton for reform was defeated by a chance division of 55 to 43, there not being sufficient speakers to carry the debate over the dinner hour. On the 9th of May a like accident was guarded against, and the discussion was worthier of the cause. Still there was no general belief that organic change had approached the period of ripening into legislative fruit. On both sides there was an evident disposition to generalise or speculate ; and when Hobhouse had exhausted the stock arguments for household suffrage, large constituencies, and short Parliaments, no one on the ministerial side took the trouble to reply, and the debate would have died out had not the member for Herts risen to express his dissent from certain of the doctrines of his more advanced friend. Like most of the Whigs who leaned to Mr. Canning, he was disposed to deprecate making reform a party question until religious liberty had been achieved. He regarded, moreover, the extreme demands made universally by popular assemblies at the time as wholly impracticable, and calculated to harden the heart of resistance against those measures of progress which began to look attainable. Ward's letters to Bishop Copleston at this period described the uneasiness and despondency of the moderate party in Parliament at the advocacy by men like Lord Althorp, Mr. Lambton, Dr. Lushington, and Lord J. Russell of comprehensive changes in the representation. Mackintosh and Brougham would have been content to leave many of the nomination boroughs untouched, and to transfer seats to large towns from small places wherein from time to time corruption might be proved on petition. Had the alternative of a new suffrage been left to the Liberal opposition to decide, a great preponderance would have ruled for twenty rather than ten pounds a year. Lamb's reply to Hobhouse touched skilfully the chords of this state of feeling, and its success as a speech was long remembered.

It is easy, of course, to turn the telescope of experience the wrong way, and call such improvements on the oligarchical system of representation then existing, diminutive and dwarfish. Why did not men who ten years later were fain to force the passing of Schedule A, even at the risk of convulsion, see beforehand what was coming, and boldly

anticipate the duty of wholesale redistribution? The answer is plain and unanswerable. The mob in Covent Garden were ready for radical reform, but the mass of the community were not; and to force its adoption therefore by Parliament would have been wrong had it been seriously contemplated. The discussion of thorough-going theories with half-empty benches at St. Stephen's was an easy way of acquiring popularity; and it helped, no doubt, gradually to educate opinion. But the minority, if taken at their word, must have been driven to own that the changes they advocated could in 1821 have only been imposed by the legislative will of an insignificant minority, by dint of threats of physical force. Looking back at things as they eventually fell out, who will now hesitate to confess that it was better for the permanent peace and welfare of the nation that opinion in favour of electoral reform was allowed to ripen slowly and steadily, instead of being prematurely snatched at and flung into the wine-press of revolution?

Lord Wellesley had demanded power to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, and the passing of the Insurrection Bill. Lord Folkestone opposed going into Committee, as did Spring Rice. Lamb had such confidence in the Lord Lieutenant, whom he warmly panegyrised, and generally in the Government declaration of their policy, that he supported the bills. So did Sir J. Newport, Mr. Calcraft, and Colonel Davies. George Lamb voted, 25th April, 1822, for Lord J. Russell's motion in favour of parliamentary reform. William Lamb neither voted nor paired.

As a minimum of concession Canning, on the 30th April, moved for leave to bring in a bill to enable Roman Catholic peers to sit and vote in Parliament. His elaborate speech on the occasion was listened to with feelings of mingled delight and sadness by Huskisson and Lamb, and many more who had reason to regard it as a farewell offering on a shrine where the high-priest of their political faith and hope was but too likely to minister no more. Contrary to the usual practice, even at this preliminary stage the proposal encountered vehement opposition, and the first reading was carried in a House of near five hundred members by a majority of only five. On the 10th of May the second reading was peremptorily opposed by Mr. Secretary Peel, who deprecated earnestly the success of the bill in proportion to the probability of the success of the general measure of emancipation. Lord Londonderry supported the concession, and it was carried by a majority of twelve. The Duke of Portland moved the second reading in the Upper House. Lords Erskine, Grey, Grenville and Holland supported, Lords Colchester and Eldon opposed. The measure was lost by 171 to 129, including proxies; and the disheartened friends of toleration learned that its distinguished author was about to quit the scene of his ineffectual struggles for the Golden East. The Directors of the East India Company had chosen Canning for their next Governor-General, and the Government, too glad to be relieved of his presence in Parliament, with effusion ratified their choice. His small

but brilliant staff of adherents was disbanded, and at the end of the session he went to take leave of his constituents at Liverpool.

On the day after the prorogation, Lord Melbourne entertained at Whitehall a distinguished party, at what the Court Newsman designated "a grand turtle dinner." It was the last of the banquets given during the season to please Lady Caroline and Mrs. George Lamb, rather than to gratify any lingering fancy of the aged host for luxurious display. A few days after Lady Holland made it a point that the familiar circle should once more meet around her table, before the world went out of town; and so it happened that they had not separated for the autumn, when tidings of a deplorable event became known, which it was felt by all must inevitably lead to consequences of the greatest moment. The minister who for ten trying years had led the House of Commons and guided the foreign policy of the empire, in a paroxysm of mental aberration had fallen by his own hand. Nothing else was thought or spoken of for many days. Irrespective of party, Lord Londonderry had many attached friends; and a still more numerous circle who admired his courage and equanimity in public life, and delighted in his amenity, gentleness, and absolute freedom from affectation or pretension in private intercourse. The intrepid champion of reactionary views abroad and at home, he had long been pre-eminently hated and feared by the friends of constitutional progress; but no provocation could ruffle his parliamentary temper, and no threat of revolution bend or break his resolve that England should adhere to the policy agreed upon at the Congress of Vienna. Personally, few men exercised a greater power to charm, when he had time to be at the trouble; and in the interchange of courtesies and hospitalities he seemed wholly unconscious of the prejudices arising from differences of opinion. Without eloquence or wit, he possessed extraordinary influence in Parliament, and retained to the last the friendship of not a few opponents, and the affection of every friend who had known or trusted him. To Lamb he had invariably shown kindness and consideration; and it seemed but yesterday that they had parted at Westminster with mutual expressions of good-will, signifying little at the time, but recalled by the survivor in a deep sense of melancholy. The unchecked ebullition of satisfaction with which the deplorable event was received out of doors moved him only with a shudder of disgust, and made him all the more outspoken in paradoxical apology for faults, and exaggerated praise of good qualities.

In the funeral cortège which followed Londonderry's remains to the Abbey were the carriages of Lord Sydney, Melbourne, and Listowel, with those of many of his political friends. But popular hatred was too much concentrated upon one object to distinguish whose liveries were there. It was a dreadful scene of passionate and implacable rage, such as before or since has not desecrated the portal of the cathedral. In Jerusalem Chamber assembled many who had served under the deceased statesman, some whom he had promoted, others whom he

had befriended, in order to pay the last tribute of respect ; and there were gathered also, Lords Grenville, Althorp, Bective and Gower, Alexander Baring, Sir Walter Stirling, and William Lamb. It was not possible that his mind should not turn to the imminent consequences of an event so startling ; and he shared the curiosity of the Duke of Devonshire, whom he saw on his way through town from Paris, and of Lord Holland as to what would happen to Canning and what he would do.

While staying at Seaforth, the residence of Mr. John Gladstone, one of his influential supporters at Liverpool, the disappointed statesman under sentence of viceregal banishment received the tidings that the rival who had so long held the Foreign Office against him was no more. "Not gone yet," was the irrepressible thought of every friend of Canning who was tardily preparing for exile. George IV. received the news at Edinburgh when about to commence a royal progress through Scotland. Instinctively he drew the same inference as they had done ; and wrote urgently to the Premier that no steps should be taken with regard to the vacant post until he should have an opportunity of conferring personally with him. In point of form Lord Liverpool obeyed the interdict ; but he needed no time to consider what must be done. The Duke of Wellington without hesitation arrived at a similar conclusion, that in the Foreign Office Canning was now inevitable. The Congress of Verona was to meet in October, and England had agreed to be represented there. Some of the last official papers which the deceased minister had taken with him to his seat at North Cray related to the proposals about to be submitted by Russia to the Privy Council of Europe for the more effectual suppression of representative aspirations in Italy and Spain. What he had meditated saying or doing at the approaching conclave was still to a certain extent doubtful ; but having long had the conduct of English diplomacy completely in his hands, his colleagues had grown accustomed to rely mainly on his judgment, and the King on his disposition. Now all was changed ; and the man whom the Court and Cabinet regarded with misgiving must be the builder if not the architect of a new foreign policy, unless indeed they could make with him beforehand reassuring terms. But how and by whom was this to be done ? Canning was too subtle and astute to squabble about the length of the reins or the colour of the ribbons to be placed at first on the horse's heads. Give him only the power, and he would use it as opportunity served. It was not till after a long interview on the 11th of September that his old and attached friend Lord Liverpool shook him by the hand cordially and congratulated him on renouncing the governorship of India, to be Secretary of State and leader of the House of Commons. How greatly this event was to influence the career of the subject of this biography he himself assuredly did not know.

Various and opposite were the feelings which Canning's sudden change of fortune caused in the ranks of the Opposition. Hobhouse and Lambton and nearly all the extreme men of the party had been

congratulating themselves that they should hear his merciless jeers at their expense no more. Plunket and Lamb and most of the moderate Liberals were glad, on the contrary, that he should remain. Canning offered the third under-secretaryship (then incompatible with a seat in Parliament) to Lord Binning; and on his declining, to Mr. Ward, who consulted everybody he knew on the subject, and for more than a fortnight could not make up his mind what to do. His father was all against it, unwilling to forego the fond expectation that he would one day cut a great figure in Parliament. Copleston, who knew his weakness best, and grieved to see his fine understanding slowly drifting to ruin for want of active occupation which might compel him to cease thinking of his real or imaginary ailments, urged him to accept. Tierney said he ought to refuse, because he hated Canning, and because to his mind, wounded and worn with pecuniary embarrassments incurred in a long struggle to keep his position, the notion seemed absurd of a young man with vast expectations relinquishing his seat to drudge in an office at fifteen hundred a year. William Lamb wrote from Panshanger:

"I received your letter this morning alone, destroyed it as soon as I had read it, and have considered its contents as I rode over here from Brocket; and upon the whole, putting myself in your place, I have little doubt that you should accept the offer. It is one of the pleasantest places under Government—necessarily gives an insight into all that is going on, and would be rendered to you particularly agreeable by your cordial agreement, and intimacy with your principal—add to this that it would have the effect of supporting and assisting Canning at this moment—that it might lead to more—that it would give you what you want in occupation and employment—and that, without flattering your abilities and knowledge of the world at home and abroad, it might enable you to be of essential service to the ministry and the country. These are considerations sufficient, in my mind, to induce you to accept; at the same time do not take it unless you can make up your mind, in the first place, to bear every species of abuse and misrepresentation, and the imputation of the most sordid and interested motives; in the second place, to go through with it if you undertake it, and not to be dispirited by any difficulties or annoyances which you may find in the office, and which you may depend upon it no office is free from. I write in a great hurry, and with a bad pen, but if you can read it you will understand me as well as if I had written three times as much.

"Yours very sincerely, W. LAMB."¹

From day to day the mind of the hypochondriac oscillated between conflicting doubts as to what people would think, and as to what he ought to think himself of the proposal. It ended in his refusing, and the post was offered to Frederick Lamb, whom he describes as just of his own age, but his superior in talents. He likewise declined, where

¹ To the Hon. J. W. Ward from Panshanger, September 29th, 1822.

upon Canning, desirous of pleasing the King, appointed Lord Francis Conyngham.

Lady Caroline cared little for politics for their own sake ; but she liked celebrities of every sort, and politicians amongst the rest. Youth and age, wealth and poverty were of small account with her, and in her drawing-room were to be met critics and poets, philosophers and dramatists, promising wits from Cambridge, and veteran book-makers from the Row. She had made the acquaintance of Godwin soon after her ineffectual effort to get his vote for George Lamb at Westminster. He made himself agreeable, and she was delighted with the eccentricity of his opinions. Her husband had read without being much struck by his 'Theory of Political Justice'; of 'Caleb Williams' and 'St. Leon' he thought more highly. Hobhouse considered him a bore ; but the son of an old friend in Herts, fresh from the University, and with his head full of Bond Street and Lord Byron, asked as a special favour that her ladyship would present him to the father of Mary Wollstonecraft, whose art as a novelist filled him, as the style of Hume did Gibbon, "with admiration and despair." The name of the youth was Edward Lytton Bulwer. In a letter without date, but evidently about this period, she wrote :

"My brother, William Ponsonby, is so much delighted with the two books you left with me, and I am so enchanted with the letter of advice to the young American, that we both request you to send us a list of all your publications for the use of young people. Send also to St. James' Square, Hon. William Ponsonby, 'The Advice to the American,' 'A Roman History,' and, 'The Pantheon.' I forget my brother's number, but it is next door to the Duke of St. Albans. Mr. Lytton Bulwer, a very young man and an enthusiast, wishes to be introduced to you. He is taking his degree at Cambridge ; on his return pray let me make him acquainted with you. I shall claim your promise of coming to Brockton ; would your daughter or son accompany you? Hobhouse came to me last night ; how strange it is I love Lord Byron so much now in my old age, in despite of all he is said to have said ; and I also love Hobhouse because he so warmly takes his part. Pray write to me, for you see your advice has had some effect. I have been studying your little books with an ardour and a pleasure which would surprise you ; but what has vexed me is that the two children and four young women to whom I endeavoured to read them, did not choose to attend. . . . After all, what is the use of anything here below, but to be enlightened and try to make others happy? From this day I will endeavour to conquer all my violence, all my passions ; but you are destined to be my master. The only thing that checks my ardour is this : For what purpose, for whom should I endeavour to grow wise? What is the use of anything? What is the end of life? When we die, what difference is there here between a black-beetle and me? . . . The only thoughts that ever can make me lose my senses are these :—A want of knowledge as to what is really true ; a certainty that I am useless ; a fear that I am worthless ; a belief that all

is vanity and vexation of spirit, and that there is nothing new under the sun. The only prayer I ever say besides the sinner's, and the only life I shall ever leave written."

William Ponsonby—who was nearest to her in age of her brothers, and, throughout her wanderings and troubles, was ever ready to listen patiently to her complainings and to turn aside gently the querulous and fitful thoughts with which it was in vain to reason—tried to pique her sense of dignity. Her quarrel with Byron was now of long standing, and was generally known: and on this, as on most other subjects that fascinated her wandering imagination, she was ready, on brief acquaintance, to speak unreservedly to any one who would listen to her. It was to no purpose that her brother hushed her into silence on such a theme. In a placid mood she would promise to be more reserved, because he wished it, not because she was convinced she had been wrong. But at the first allusion to a sardonic fling of the poet in conversation or correspondence, whereof stories were seldom long wanting, she would break out, as formerly, in a torrent of reproach and lament, wildly recounting passages which had, or which she dreamed had, occurred between them; and generally ending in an invective against nameless wicked ones who had poisoned his mind against her. Before they left town for Easter, she wrote, by desire of her husband, to remind Godwin of his promised visit to Bocket, where they meant to stay a week:

"We are, and shall be, entirely alone until I have seen my dear father, who returns from Italy in May. Your room will be always ready, and a quiet day in the country may not displease you; and, as I said before, a person with your mind can, I am sure, encounter all the dulness of a mere family party without fear. You have only to choose a fine day, and let us know the night before; you will be sure to be welcome.

"I am, with respect and truth, yours,

"C. L.

"Melbourne House. Actually four in the morning."

From Bocket, some weeks later, in a fit of gloomy egotism, she warned her correspondent not to imagine that there was anything, after all, marked, sentimental, or interesting in her career:—

"All I know is, that I was happy, well, rich, joyful, and surrounded by friends. I have now one faithful, kind friend in William Lamb, two others in my father and brother—but health, spirits, and all else is gone—gone how? Oh, assuredly not by the visitation of God, but slowly and gradually, by my own fault! You said you would like to see me and speak to me. I shall, if possible, be in town in a few days. When I come I will let you know. The last time I was in town, I was on my bed three days, rode out and came off here on the 4th. God preserve you.

"Yours, C. L."

She delighted in the woods and gardens at Bocket—a paradise, full of flowers and fruits, only wanting inhabitants. Her invalid boy

and her venerable father-in-law divided her attention ; but the alternate spectacle of the infirmity of youth and the infirmity of age added only to the deepening habit of despondency.

Sir Charles and Lady Morgan, on their return from Italy, stayed some time in London, and were frequently guests at Whitehall. Lady Caroline's early predilection for the Wild Irish Girl had not lessened with years ; she admired the courage and originality of her friend, and spent a good deal of time in her company. Lamb was seldom of their coterie, but he liked talking about books with Sir Charles, who had wandered a good deal off the beaten tracks of reading ; and he enjoyed still more a dish of foreign politics with his wife, the abuse of whom in certain journals he condemned unsparingly. In this, as in many other instances, he seemed to make it a point to be attentive and kind to those who were favourites of Lady Caroline ; and long after her death, when unexpected power had come to him, he availed himself cheerfully of the opportunity it gave to confer upon the authoress an important benefit.

CHAPTER X.

LADY CAROLINE AND HER SON.

Domestic Life—Augustus Lamb—Letters to Godwin—Huskisson—Reply to Mackintosh—Refusal of office—Death and funeral of Byron—Alienation.

AUTUMN glided by more tranquilly than usual. Harvest ripened plentifully, and was early gathered in. Employment grew once more abundant, disaffection gradually gave place to reasonable hopes of progress, and the name of Government was less unpopular than it had been. Instead of unattainable projects of organic change, men's thoughts turned to the prospect of substantial improvements in the laws affecting industry and trade. Murmurs and reproaches at our support of the Holy Alliance gave place to glad expectation that England was about to point the way, if not to aid, the nations of the West in gradual self-emancipation. The whole tone of administration was softened ; and while Canning was preparing his colleagues in the Cabinet and the mind of the King to recognise the independence of the South American States, and warning the Porte that if the Greeks were not humanely and justly governed Christendom would recognise the rending of their thrall ; while Huskisson was elaborating measures for the liberation of trade, and Peel preparing mitigations of the criminal code that Romilly would have rejoiced to see—moderate Liberals were drawing slowly but steadily towards the Government. Lamb found every day less and less in which he differed from Pal-

merston and Huskisson ; and altogether he was politically inclined to be more hopeful and better content.

Lord Melbourne dozed placidly in the sunshine, withdrawn altogether from the bustle of the world, and satisfied if he saw those around him healthful and happy. Even the troubled spirit of Lady Caroline partook of the general temper of content. Alluding to a contrary surmise in a recent review of her novels, she said she would not be judged by what she had written in 'Ada Reis,' as if it had been meant descriptively :—

"I am satisfied with all I have. My husband has been to me a guardian angel ; I love him most dearly ; and my boy, though afflicted, is clever, amiable, and cheerful. Let me not be judged by hasty words and hasty letters. My heart is calm as a lake on a fine summer day ; and I am as grateful to God for His mercy and blessing as it is possible to be."

Unhappily, the placid surface was but too easily ruffled. The son of so many hopes and cares was nearly seventeen, well-grown for his age, and in features not ill-favoured ; delicate in health, and of languid temperament, but uncomplaining, easily amused, rather of a reading turn, courteous, tractable, and fond. There was no indulgence his mother would not give him ; no boyish whim of curiosity his father would not gladly gratify, if he would only ask it, or take it without asking. But he asked not, or asked for so little suitable to his years ; and when provided by the yearning forethought of affection, it called forth no ejaculation of surprise or joy. His lips did not forget gentle words of thanks ; but his eye kindled not, and his hand did not grasp the new fishing-rod or the new pony's bridle as if it was his own. He could play cards with his grandfather, and was ready whenever the old lord was in the humour, but he hardly cared whether he lost or won, and was content to give over at the slightest hint of weariness. He did not revoke, and was even shrewd in his play, but it was too like the cleverness of the automaton. When those about him talked he listened, and when they laughed he smiled ; but he rarely caught the contagion of their mirth, and seldom joined in the conversation. The impetuous mother strove in her erratic way to rally him into activity, or pique him into self-assertion, but all to no purpose. It was not in him to contend with her about anything, and as to the future, it was a region far beyond his ken or dream. And when she gave up the effort in despair, and was unable to hide her vexation, he would take her hand in his as though he thought he ought to soothe her if he knew how. But the cause of her grief and its intensity were as incomprehensible to him as its remedy was to her. In her perplexity she turned from physical to mental science. Medical skill could do nothing ; but a metaphysician—a man who had made the mind's workings, the strength and weakness of brain power, a study—who understood, or professed to understand, the difference between genius and learning, aptitude and dulness, passion and phlegm, reserve and incoherency, in all their strange varieties—might not he have insight

into the great affliction of her life, and minister to a mind diseased? She would consult Godwin—have him down to Bocket, where he could observe the symptoms of the mental case under all circumstances, and form his diagnosis of the malady, if malady it were, and then advise, or mayhap, cure. Lamb did not share her fond anticipations. He knew tolerably well all that psychology had done in the way of opening new shafts into the depths of the great enigma of existence, what strata of curious rubbish it had drawn forth and cleared away, and what small residuum of precious things it had to show for its laborious delving. He knew that when the owner of one pit died another was opened by some new speculator in the wealth of the unseen world, to be neglected and superseded in his turn by some yet more confident adventurer. But for comfort, light, or even for termination of controversy, he had come to the conclusion that all their metaphysic learning and logic was but vanity and vexation of spirit: and he groaned as he said within himself—they cannot kindle mind, not ready to be set aflame; or tell us how and why it will not burn. He did not object, however, to the renewed invitation to Godwin, whom he rather liked. Lady Caroline's letter, as usual, touched on a good many other subjects than the one uppermost in her thoughts—her own unappeasable discontent with herself and her destiny.

“From the moment when I saw you last under such excessive agitation, until the present moment, I have been—you said I might be if I would—calm and perfectly well, and tolerably happy. Is it not strange, then, that I can suffer my mind to be so overpowered, and mostly about trifles? Can you think of me with anything but contempt? Tell me, would you dislike paying me a little visit? I will not allure you by descriptions of a country life. If you come, I imagine it is to pay me a friendly visit, and if you do not, I shall feel secure you have good reason for not coming. The whole of what passed, which set me so beside myself, I forget and forgive; for my own faults are so great that I can see and remember nothing beside. Yet I am tormented with such superabundance of activity, and have so little to do, that I want you to tell me how to go on. It is all very well if one died at the end of a tragic scene, after playing a desperate part; but if one lives, instead of growing wiser one remains the same victim of every folly and passion, without the excuse of youth and inexperience: what then? Pray say a few wise words to me. There is no one more deeply sensible than myself of kindness from persons of high intellect, and at this period of my life I need it. I have nothing to do—I mean necessarily. There is no particular reason why I should exist; it conduces to no one's happiness, and, on the contrary, I stand in the way of many. Besides, I seem to have lived five hundred years, and feel I am neither better nor worse than when I began. My experience gives me no satisfaction; all my opinions and beliefs and feelings are shaken, as if suffering from frequent little shocks of earthquakes. I am like a boat in a calm, in an unknown and, to me, unsought-for sea, without compass to guide or even a knowledge whither I am

destined. Now, this is probably the case of millions, but that does not mend the matter, and whilst a fly exists, it seeks to save itself. Therefore excuse me if I try to do the same. Pray write to me, and tell me also what you have done about my journal. Thank you for the frame; will you pay for it, and send me in any account we have at your house? I am very anxious about my dear boy. I must speak to you of him. Every one, as usual, is kind to me; I want for nothing this earth can offer, but self-control. Forgive my writing so much about myself, and believe me most sincerely yours."

It may be easily imagined that the writer of a letter like this to a comparative stranger was little suited for the intimate companionship of wedlock with any man of exigent and fastidious nature, however gentle and generous he might be. The confidence that gave her unlimited freedom in the disposition of her time and choice of friends, her husband would indeed have conceded as easily to any woman that he loved. Distrust was not in him, and his pride would not accept compulsory devotion. Proofs of affection touched him deeply when they were spontaneous, and given as though unconsciously, and without profession or explanation of purpose. But he winced at a caress that insisted on exacting acknowledgment there and then; and chafed at the notion that any sacrifice made for him, whether great or small, imposed an obligation. He was ready to deny himself many things he liked, to please or gratify his wife; and he wished for nothing in return but the unclouded look and simple accents of her love. He was delighted when he saw that she on her part gave up in trifles her own way, as she was sometimes ready to do, to humour or amuse him. But all was marred by the insatiable longing for the romance rather than the reality of fondness. She did not upbraid him with occasional absence, but she mourned over it as evidence unmistakable that she was forgotten and might be done without. She was very proud of his attention, and of the admiration of others for him; and she had too much discernment not to see, though she had too much delicacy to show, how much she felt chagrined at her share of social celebrity being less than his; but it grieved her ambition, which was boundless, and her avarice for distinction, which was unappeasable; and, worse than all, she fretted herself to death because she was not thought an indispensable part of his being. Could she have only persuaded herself of that, and that he felt it to be so, she imagined she would have been happy, and failing this, her misfortune and his misery was, that she was for ever brooding over her lot, explaining her unhappiness to him, and telling her story to the whole world in prose and verse. His forbearance by the testimony of all who knew them was unspeakable; but his very equanimity and self-control occasionally aggravated her vexation. After spending a week in the country, with no other society than hers, humouring quietly every whim, and letting every little petulance pass without remonstrance, she would get into a paroxysm at his impassibility, declare that he treated her like a child, and that she

was the most solitary of women. The fountains of the great deep of his impatience were then broken up, and it rained a terrible tempest of rebuke and ridicule, intermixed with reasoning harder to bear than either, for the space of half an hour. But he soon relented, and his irritation passed away.

It is hardly necessary to say that Godwin was unable to afford any consolation during his visit to his friends, respecting the condition of their child, for child he still remained in all but outward form. The philosopher appeared occasionally among the crowd of notabilities, political and literary, at Melbourne House, and Lady Caroline always made him welcome.

The first significant proof of Canning's power, and his determination to use it, was the introduction of Mr. Huskisson into the Cabinet.¹ His services in subordinate office were well known to Lord Liverpool, but the liberality of his opinions on questions of taxation and trade, and those connected with foreign affairs, had hitherto stood in his way. Up to this time he had never voted for the removal of religious disabilities or for any concession of electoral reform, yet he was looked upon as an unsafe man ; and the Chancellor's consent to his promotion was so little to be expected that it was not asked.² At first Lord Liverpool did not venture more than to offer him the Presidency of the Board of Trade, with which was then associated the Treasurership of the Navy. Difficulties, he said, about making the Cabinet too numerous alone prevented his immediate admission ; but the earliest opportunity would be taken of giving him the rank which he had fairly earned. With this Canning and Lamb advised him to be satisfied, and in January he accepted the offer accordingly. But when the session of 1823 had passed without the promise being fulfilled, Canning, who felt the ground growing firm beneath him, told the Premier that if, with his hands full of foreign affairs, he was to lead the Commons, as the times required they should be led, through the series of fiscal and financial changes that could no longer be postponed, he must have by his side in Council as well as in the House some one on whom he could absolutely rely to think with and for him. The mere consumption of time in the work of the Foreign Office rendered it impossible for him to gather and collate the masses of fact necessary for the elucidation of various and complicated subjects. Palmerston could not render the same sort of assistance, and was even less acceptable to the King. On Huskisson he could thoroughly depend, and his presence in the Cabinet was therefore indispensable ; the Premier himself was already well-disposed, and before ministers separated in August, Huskisson was included in their number. The announcement was received with no little satisfaction by Lamb. There had of late been more of approximation and confidence between them. From opposite sides both had

¹ January 21st, 1823.

² Lord Eldon's letter to Lord Stowell, January, 1823.

become more and more identified with the middle policy of Canning. Huskisson was preparing to concur in the demand for complete religious liberty; Lamb, for the sake of obtaining that liberty, to support, irrespective of party antecedents, any Government by which its advent might be hastened. Lord Granville, connected by early friendship with Huskisson, and by the ties of family with Lamb, enjoyed peculiarly the confidence of the Foreign Secretary; while Lord Palmerston, and other members of the Government who had always voted with him on the Catholic question, daily looked with strengthening hope to the time when he should be at the head of affairs.

From this period may be dated the slow but gradual undoing of the fiscal policy originating in the exigencies of the American War, and elaborated by Mr. Pitt and his successors, to supply the means of supporting the prolonged struggle with France. With its provisions were curiously and subtly intertwined those of preference and prohibition, which it took a quarter of a century to eradicate completely from the statute book. It was a system of elaborate intricacy and ingenuity that covered like a net-work every field and store of the realm and its wide dependencies. Affecting every act and relation of life, from the cradle to the altar, from the play-ground to the grave, it weighed down every energy of commerce, and all the elasticity of invention. Every class except the landed and the official class chafed beneath its yoke, or pined under its pressure. The income tax had been flung off in 1816 in a spasm of popular impatience, against the protests and prophecies of administration; but no such concentration of the resentments of suffering could be anticipated for the summary removal of any other impost. The schedules of articles paying custom, or excise duties; the diversities of charge and the anomalies of exemption; the riddles of drawback, and the multiplicity of penalties for breach of equivocal or half-repealed enactments, made up a code of hindrance and impediment which drove industry often to despair. To gnaw away the fringe of this web of oppression, and to curtail here a little and there a little its all-embracing folds, until better days should come and productive labour be set free, was the avowed purpose of independent thinkers like Mill and Ricardo—the esoteric purpose of Canning and Huskisson. Well-born Whigs, with the exception of Lords Lansdowne, Althorp, Milton, and Radnor, scoffed at political economy as useless for party objects; and feared the application of its rules to the produce of the soil, as likely to prove fatal at elections and ruinous to rents. The mind of Lamb in this as in most other things oscillated between opposite theories. He was too candid not to own, and too just not to condemn, the enormities of the existing system. Prohibition of every kind he was ready to sweep away, and competition in all branches of production he was ready to facilitate. What might or ought to come afterwards, he did not pretend to calculate. The remedial measures brought forward by his friends in

office from 1823 to 1826 were practical and humane ; cordially, therefore, he supported them all. He was rather proud of Huskisson being in the Cabinet, and rather liked him at a quiet dinner ; if he would but hold himself better, and dress better, and not be so con-foundedly deferential to blockheads he must in his heart despise, merely because they dined oftener at Brighton, or had two or three borough seats in their pockets.

Lamb, receptive and discerning, looked into the heart of the man with interest and sympathy. Glad of his gladness, and proud of his pride, he could not help quizzing him a little on his occasional ponderosity and tapistical reserve. Huskisson's equanimity took all in good part ; and sometimes he was too much pre-occupied with his own computative thoughts to heed or hear the hadinage of his kinsman. But was he not worth a score of the ordinary talkers and voters in St. Stephen's Chapel to the right or left of the chair ? And was not Canning better worth following than anybody else whatsoever ? Day by day, in common with several of his Whig friends, he drew closer to the eloquent and enlightened minister. Canningism was hardly yet a positive or distinctive creed, but among all parties it made proselytes and had devoted believers.

The Huskissons were from this time more frequently at Bocket. Lady Caroline was to him a puzzle and a marvel ; the aged peer was to her an object of gentle deference and regard. The more the friends talked politics, the more Canningite Lamb became ; and, as unreserve had grown with him to be a social habit, he began to be suspected by out-and-out Whigs in the county of wavering in his party allegiance. This would not have so much mattered had it ended there. But when in the course of the parliamentary fray, ranks were broken and old rallying cries disregarded, from the desire to save the progressive section of the Ministry from defeat, the name of the county member in the opposite division list to that which contained Althorp, Russell, and Brougham, set staunch Nonconformists and hitherto lenient Liberals by the ears. Dogmatic Benthamites, of which there were few, and incoherent Cobbetites, of which there were many, half-ossified Whigs, and Radicals of imperfect formation, cast their respective shells on the heap of reproach ; but with so little of clamour or combination that it widened and rose high without his noticing the fact.

Fiscal and legal reforms occupied chiefly the attention of Parliament during the session of 1824, and Lamb took little part in their discussion. He listened with interest to the first remarkable speech of Mr. Stanley, then in his twenty-seventh year, who grappled vigorously with the arguments of Mr. Hume against maintenance of the Irish Church, and thus undertook, as the favourite and special duty of his life, a defence which, after five and forty years, he was compelled by his own followers reluctantly to abandon. In the effort of George Lamb to introduce the principle that counsel should be allowed to address the jury on behalf of persons on trial for their lives,

his brother took much interest ; but, the debate having been prolonged to a later hour than was expected, he was accidentally shut out of the division. His only reported speech of any interest this year was against a motion of Hobhouse, on the 23rd of March, who, with the approval of the more advanced Liberals, endeavoured to prevent a renewal of the Alien Act. Recent attempts at insurrection in Italy and Spain had been loudly encouraged at popular meetings and in the press ; but in the substantial form of contributions the aid offered had been small, and the only proof of continued sympathy with those who suffered for their premature devotion to the cause of freedom was unmeasured abuse of the rulers who had stamped out revolt. England was almost the only secure asylum for the fugitives who had escaped at the end of each abortive struggle, and there was no real danger that any Secretary of State would listen to demands for their surrender : Lord Grenville had been firm and haughty in repudiating any suggestion of the kind even in the anti-Jacobin days of Pitt ; and under a Foreign Minister like Canning it was not alleged that any unhappy exile had cause to fear betrayal. But Lord Liverpool was apprehensive lest the right of asylum should be abused by reckless or desperate men, and the good faith of our national pledge of non-intervention compromised : and the Foreign Secretary, who had more difficulties with the Court and in the Cabinet than he dared confess or explain, thought he might be safely trusted with a deadly weapon of old-fashioned form which he could not be suspected of willingness to use. There was no statute law of asylum to whose reservations of control he could appeal on any sudden emergency ; and the Alien Act was in truth a clumsy device to enable the Executive summarily to send any foreigner out of the country whose presence should have become mischievous or dangerous. Mackintosh objected to an expedient so out of joint with his philosophy of freedom ; Althorp, because he distrusted the plausible and devious ways of the minister.

Lamb took a different view. Replying to Mackintosh, he said :—

“ Nothing was so unsafe, nothing so uncertain, as analogy ; but if any one thing could be more unsafe or more uncertain than another, it was historical analogy. It was impossible to know the circumstances as they had previously existed. It was very easy to depreciate what was done at this or that former time, and to scatter sarcasm and invective on affairs that possibly were entitled to be very differently treated. He deprecated the indiscriminate language of vituperation lavished on various foreign Governments. Lamenting as much as the honourable gentleman could do that civil and religious liberty did not flourish as he could wish it (and he undoubtedly wished that every nation should obtain liberty suited to its own habits, manners, and character), he would ask if the existing situation of certain countries of Europe, degraded as it was described to be, ought to be attributed solely to the Sovereigns now reigning, and their ministers, or to the impracticable designs of that very Radical party who now lamented

over the evils by which these countries were afflicted? Surely those who wished the people to resist their governments ought to know that to attempt to relieve a country from arbitrary power without the least chance of success was in fact a folly. He lamented to be obliged to say that injurious efforts abroad had been seconded by the violent and indefensible language used towards foreign Governments in that and the other House of Parliament. Such language could do no good; it might be productive of much mischief. There was, besides, no courage in it. Tyranny and oppression were not confined to absolute monarchies; republics, whether democratical or aristocratical, had ever exhibited a spirit of great domestic tyranny, of much greater foreign aggression than monarchies; nor was the abuse so freely bestowed on certain foreign rulers in the British Parliament, in his opinion, more wise than it was brave. Seeing the state of Europe at the present moment, recollecting that some individuals had thought proper to interfere with the internal concerns of foreign states, recollecting what had fallen from the Secretary for Foreign Affairs as to the policy which the Cabinet of England wished to pursue, and recollecting that there was an evident disposition on the part of some persons in this country to mix themselves up with the affairs of foreign powers—a disposition, he doubted not, which arose from the noblest motive, from the warm love which Englishmen bore to liberty, from that superabundance of talent and activity which so eminently distinguished this country, a disposition which he admitted to be praiseworthy, but which was not therefore the less dangerous, the less embarrassing to this country, or the less offensive to foreign powers—feeling very strongly on these points, he should vote for the bill as a proper and necessary measure. He did so the more readily because he believed that the Secretary of State for the Foreign Department would never countenance any act that was calculated to tarnish the honour of the country; and that he would be as far from giving up any principle which appeared to be beneficial to mankind as any minister that had ever gone before him."

About this time Lord Liverpool offered him, through Huskisson, one of the junior offices in the Government, and he is believed to have communicated on the subject with Canning. The views of the flexible and aspiring statesman tended palpably towards detaching moderate men from the old standards of party and combining them under his own. But the Whigs showed little disposition to change sides individually, and so long as Lord Eldon was Chancellor and Lord Liverpool Premier the acceptance of office would only be regarded by the world in that light. Lamb declined the offer, saying only to the few intimates who knew of its having been made that he preferred freedom to enjoy his books and pleasures, which in a certain sense was true; for, whatever confidence he may have had in the eventual aims of Canning, or his power to impress his reconstructive image and superscription on the policy of his own department, the position of a sincere Liberal in any subordinate office of the Liver-

pool administration could not be otherwise than compromising and humiliating. Huskisson would have gladly hailed his enrolment among the friends of Canning; and Stafford House already leaned that way. But the Duke of Devonshire, whom he always consulted, approved of his resolution to remain independent and to bide his time.

With the luxurious establishments, almost his own, at Whitehall and in Hertfordshire he might well be content. But the profuse expenditure of his wife, though capriciously chequered at times with odd fits of self-denial, had for a good while far exceeded his allowance; and though he did not play or bet to any amount worth noticing, he found himself often without a balance on which to draw for sums the world believed he might easily throw away. It is a curious illustration of his condition, that on one occasion Francis Place, who had given him credit for some years, and who found it impossible to get a settlement of his account, had him served with a writ; instructing his solicitor at the same time "to see what that would do; but, d—n it, nothing further." Other mortifications arising from his easy-going unthrift followed; the old Viscount, who had long outlived the taste for squandering, thought Lady Caroline too profuse, but except in passing vows of retrenchment, forgotten as soon as made, her "Lavishship," as he sometimes called her, cared for none of these things. Her husband tried in various ways to persuade her to curb her taste for fantastic outlay; and perhaps the vexation arising from her failure to do so tended to generate in his own disposition a certain degree of inconsistency regarding money, of which, when he came at last to have abundance, he was alternately generous and the contrary. An allusion to the subject occurs in one of her earlier letters to Lady Morgan:—

"Would I could be useful! I did write a book about stables and domestic economy, upon a new and beautiful plan; but unless some one saw it and thought it good, I would not venture to publish it; yet I wrote it while I was writing 'Ada Reis.' My laundry and stables I conduct upon that plan to save myself trouble, but it is more difficult to put it into practice in a house, although it was done, and with success one year. I mention this to show you I, too, have been a good housewife, and saved William much; but he says, What is the use of saving in one place if you squander all away in another? Alas! what is the use of anything? We may go on saying what is the use, till we really puzzle ourselves, as I did as to why we exist at all."¹

Byron's death was known in England early in May, and on the 12th of July his remains were followed out of London, on the way to their last resting-place at Newstead, by Campbell, Rogers, Moore, Hobhouse, Leicester, Stanhope, and other attached friends. After most of the distinguished mourners had returned to town, the sad procession took the north road through Hertfordshire, and was met by an open carriage, one of whose occupants inquired whose funeral passed by.

¹ Letter to Lady Morgan, Bocket.

The questioner was Lady Caroline Lamb. The effects of the shock were in every way lamentable. For a time her health seemed to sink beneath it ; and she lay as one who had been stunned, and could not be recalled to mental sensibility or interest in the ordinary concerns of life. By degrees the *ennui* of solitary grief grew irksome ; she resumed her pen, and occasionally her pencil ; then her favourite books and music ; until hopes were entertained that the dark cloud had passed over her, and that she might yet return to fill the place in society where she was certain of welcome. But it was not so to be. Her disregard of conventional opinion appeared to be more complete than ever, and her wayward indulgence of irritability on the slightest cause, more reckless and unaccountable. Caprice, to whose freaks she had childishly given way long after they had grown to the dimensions of wilful unreason, had gained the upper hand, and held her enfeebled understanding captive to its will. There was no whim of gesture or attire, no inconsistency of manner, no breach of conventional rule regarding time or place which those about her could feel confident that she might not commit. There was neither mischief nor malice in her vagaries ; and it was never whispered that she sought deliberately to do harm to any one. Sometimes they were only ludicrous ; sometimes calculated to create alarm for her own safety. One day when numerous guests were expected, she entered the dining-room when the servants were laying the table ; and, after surveying its decorations, told the butler they were too level and too low ; there was no character about them, no feature to give expression : there ought to be something picturesque or elevated ; a group of figures, or at least of flowers, high above all the rest. The well-trained man of method and observance looked at my lady and wondered, assented mildly, but went on spreading the treasures of his plate-chest, while he thought within himself, "Worse than ever." Incensed at the contumacy of his passive resistance, she peremptorily ordered the centre piece to be taken away, and then without disturbing the surrounding garniture stepped lightly into the vacant place and stood in a graceful attitude to illustrate her idea. The butler rushed from the room, and finding Lamb in the library, begged him for God's sake to come to the rescue. The moment he saw her, he said only in the gentlest tone of expostulation "Caroline, Caroline !" then took her in his arms and carried her out of doors in the sunshine, talking of some ordinary subject to divert her attention from what had happened. That evening she received her friends with as calm a look and tone as in happier days ; but what an ordeal for him to pass through !

Other incidents so strange lingered long in the memories of those who lived in the neighbourhood at the time. A visit was to be returned at Danesbury, and having no one to accompany her, she chose to occupy the seat beside the coachman, instead of her wonted place in the carriage. On arriving at the door of the mansion, the footman waited to hand her down, when to his horror she exclaimed, "I am going to jump off, and you must catch me ;" and before he could

expostulate, she had made good her word, and compelled him to perform that unusual office. But her hostess observed nothing particular in her manner during her visit, and heard nothing of the strange prank until after she was gone.

At other times, unfortunately, she gave way to fits of irritability and excitement unutterably painful ; and while the paroxysm lasted it was in vain trying to tranquillise her emotions, or appease the querulous impetuosity of her temper. While at table on one occasion at Melbourne House, her demeanour was so petulant and affronting, that when she had left the room Lamb quickly ordered horses and in half an hour was on his road to Bocket, glad to escape from the renewal of domestic strife. He sat up late enjoying the stillness of the summer night, and had not long betaken himself to rest when he was disturbed by some unusual noise in the corridor. As it did not cease, he rose, and on opening the door of his chamber found his wife lying at the entrance convulsed with what she took for grief. The absurdity and scandal of such incidents wounded his sensibility to the quick. He writhed beneath a yoke that after twenty years had grown intolerable. He could not persuade himself that she was insane ; on the contrary, he came to the conclusion, sadly but sternly, that if she found him really resolved to separate from her, she might, and perhaps would, be brought to comprehend how much she was to blame in making all around her miserable, him most of all. There was, between affection and resentment, a long and bitter struggle in his bosom ere it came to this. At last he told her quietly that his life was unendurable, and that they must part. He quitted her, and went for a time to Melbourne, where Mr. and Mrs. George Lamb resided. He would come to Bocket frequently as a matter of duty and respect to its venerable owner ; as an act of duty and of love towards his afflicted son, and as an unrepachable friend, who did not wish to keep alive the memory of unkindness, if his wife (no longer wife) would so receive him ; but he would be the sport of her fantastic whims no more. It was then that she addressed to him the lines, which when they failed to move him, she sent for publication to one of the periodicals of the day :—

If thou could'st know what 'tis to weep,
 To weep unpitied and alone,
 The livelong night, whilst others sleep,
 Silent and mournful wateh to keep,
 Thou would'st not do what I have done.

If thou could'st know what 'tis to smile—
 To smile whilst scorned by every one,
 To hide, by many an artful wile,
 A heart that knows more grief than guile,
 Thou would'st not do what I have done.

And, oh, if thou could'st think how drear,
 When friends are changed and health is gone,
 The world would to thine eyes appear,
 If thou, like me, to none wert dear,
 Thou would'st not do what I have done.

Members of the family were made aware of the reasons that had tardily and reluctantly led him to a determination, in the sad necessity of which they concurred. Their friendship for him continued unbroken to the end, especially that of her eldest brother, Lord Duncannon, with whom he ever continued to associate on terms the most confidential, both in public and private affairs.

Too late convinced by her husband's absence and the unwelcome watch over all her movements which had been prescribed as necessary, the sad consciousness came over her that she had wantonly let fall the reins of passionate whim and lawless temper. Instead of curbing the morbid impulses of discontent and self-idolatry, she had suffered them to subvert the darling privilege she so much valued of irresponsibility for her words and actions. Truly has it been said by a great analyst of human motives, that the gradations are infinite and impalpable between self-deception and voluntary fraud. Few persons know where the unfenced demesne of reason ends and the tractless wild of aberration begins. No one loved more to palter with the fiend than Byron. He delighted to climb the dizzy height of speculation and dance upon the brink of madness ; these were among his favourite devices for making the world stare and for gratifying his insatiable vanity. And of the frail natures dazzled by his example and bewildered by the witchery of his verse here was one. In her admiration and enthusiasm she drank but too deeply of his cup of morbid egotism. Warned by every true friend that in its fragrance and its sparkling there was deadliest poison, she grew impatient, angry, even resentful ; she would drink on until at last to all except herself the effect became only too palpable.

In more than one set of verses addressed to her husband, soon afterwards, she describes the bitterness of her humiliation. But the ineradicable sin of Byronism clings to every line. It is all importunity for pity from the man whose devotion she had worn out by her waywardness ; and we find them duly given to the public in the *Annuals* of the succeeding year.

Though all at once unheard, reprove me,
Left alike by friend and foe,
I will not shrink, if thou but love me,
No hand but thine can strike the blow.

* * * * *

And say'st thou that I dare not face
The storm that burst above my head?
The proud must keenly feel disgrace,
And 'tis disgrace, alone, I dread.

I fear not censure's bitter sneer,
I heed not envy's venom'd tongue,
Nor hadst thou seen one woman's tear
If my own heart had known no wrong.

And even though wrong, if thou canst love me
Or friend, or foe, may frown on me ;
Their barbarous rage shall never move me,
If blest by one kind word from thee.

Arriving in England, after a sojourn of some weeks in Paris, she wrote from Dover to the most attached of her literary correspondents in Ireland :—

“It would be charitable in you to write me a letter, and it would be most kind if you would immediately send me Lord Byron’s portrait, as more than six weeks have expired and I am again in England ; if you will send it for me to Melbourne House, to the care of the porter, I shall be most sincerely obliged to you. My situation in life now is new and strange. I seem to be left to my fate most completely, and to take my chance on rough or smooth without the smallest interest being expressed for me : it is for a good purpose, no doubt ; besides I must submit to my fate, it being without remedy. I am now with my maid at the Ship Tavern, Water Lane, having come over from Calais. I have no footman, page, carriage, horse, nor fine rooms. The melancholy of my situation in this little dreary apartment is increased by the very loud, jovial laughter of my neighbours who are smoking in the next room. Pray send me my invaluable portrait, and pray think kindly of me. Every one in France talked much of you, and with great enthusiasm. Direct to me at the Hon. William Ponsonby’s, St. James’ Square.”

Then, in the twilight of seclusion, humiliated in the vital point of all her pride, and penitent for the error of her ways, she tried earnestly and with tears to regain her husband’s love, though she dared not ask his confidence again. In the retrospect of years wasted in phantasy and frenzy, did any clue enable her to retrace her wanderings through the treacherous intricacies of self-worship ; or did the past seem all but one confused and calcined heap of disappointments ? Who shall tell ? We only know that he who has borne and foreborne beyond belief until it was no longer possible, as soon as he was told that she was really calm and wished to see him, came to her again with looks and words of the old genial and gentle time ; and that thenceforth all bickering and reproach ceased between them. Her shattered health was a sufficient reason for her living chiefly at Brocket, while his occupations led him to remain for the most part in town. Infinite care was taken to disguise from her the melancholy distrust of the abiding nature of her equanimity by all around her, while by him the part was acted to perfection in every glance and syllable of undoubting confidence in her self-possession. When absent he wrote to her continually in terms that could not be distinguished from those he had formerly used : for, besides the instinct of kindness which thus prompted him to gratify her susceptibility, he was too keen a metaphysician not to know that the sympathy of sanity continually tendered and received is the subtlest and best medicine to a mind diseased.

CHAPTER XI.

PROGRESS AND REACTION.

The Catholic Association—Repression and Concession—Failure of proposed compromise—Giving up the county—Contest for Hertford.

GEORGE IV. had in 1825 become as averse from any measure of religious or political liberty as his father had ever been. He resisted to the last the policy of recognising the independence of the South American States because they were founded in successful rebellion, and because their forms of government were republican. He would gladly have sanctioned the offer of Russia to assist Spain in a prolonged effort to reconquer her misgoverned colonies; but Canning began to feel his power in the country, and therefore in the Government; and when all his arts of suasion in the closet failed, he threatened to resign unless his policy were adopted. His heart was likewise set on seeing the Greeks freed from the Turkish yoke; but as an English minister he felt himself bound to wait until they had fairly won by persistent valour and endurance, the rights of a separate people, before according their government national recognition. While occupied with these noble aims, and with the important measures of commercial freedom brought forward by Huskisson, he did not think it expedient to press with equal urgency for the settlement of the question of religious liberty. He believed that settlement could not be long delayed, and that public opinion would inevitably overbear the tottering prejudices of class and creed. His accession to the leadership of the Commons had raised the hopes of the Catholics that some legislative effort would be made effectually to abate the rigour of exclusion; and when he was reluctantly compelled to own that in taking office he had made no actual stipulation on the subject, their disappointment was proportionately keen. The many sacrifices he had made in common with Plunket and Wellesley for the sake of consistency on the question were not indeed forgotten in Ireland; but the confessed inability of these statesmen to make their sentiments prevail in council, wrought silently but steadily a perilous change in the minds of thoughtful men on both sides of the Channel. Writing in England and for Englishmen, Sidney Smith declared that,

“Looking to the sense and reason of the thing, and to the ordinary working of humanity and justice when assisted by self-interest and worldly policy, it might seem absurd to doubt of the result. But looking to the facts and the persons by which they were surrounded, one was constrained to fear greatly that these incapacities never would be removed, till they were removed by fear.”¹

¹ S. Smith's 'Works,' vol. iii. pp. 12, 13.

Brougham and Tierney gave utterance to the same vaticination in debate. The Catholics themselves after many feuds began to unite and consolidate their strength. Shiel, who had for years incurred the distrust and anger of O'Connell, for his persistent advocacy of the more moderate courses, waived all difficulties and differences, and agreed to join in organized agitation. How sharp and bitter their enmity had been was hardly credited by their common adversaries at the time, or for many years after. But on the eve of a public meeting not long before, O'Connell wrote to a trusty henchman :—

“ I am just told that Shiel has prepared an address for the aggregate meeting full of the worst politics, rejoicing at the downfall of the spirit of democracy, a kind of ode in prose in favour of the Pitt system. I entreat of you to exert yourself to bring as many honest men as possible to the meeting to enable us to control any political rascality. Perhaps we are in more danger than you imagine.”¹

They met at the house of a friend in Wicklow in May, 1823, and interchanging admissions of despondency, agreed to appeal to all classes of their communion in an address, which they jointly signed, adjuring them to unite in a general confederacy for emancipation. The response came slowly, but it came. The Catholic Association from this mustard seed grew apace, and in the course of the following year attained a magnitude and importance of which its sanguine authors hardly dreamed. The Catholic nobles and landed proprietors, headed by Lords Gormanston and Fingall, and the Catholic clergy headed by Bishop Doyle, gave in their adhesion ; members of the Bar and wealthy merchants joined the ranks ; and many Protestants of influence and distinction enrolled themselves likewise as members. To show the power of the organization and to confute at the same time the idea that their aims were subversive of order or law, a Commission was publicly sent into the disturbed districts of Tipperary to interpose between the classes there engaged in deadly strife regarding rents and tithes ; and to offer those who thought themselves aggrieved the aid of counsel and advocacy in the established tribunal, or, if both sides would agree, the speedy settlement of disputes by arbitration. The standing text from which these missionaries preached speedily passed into a proverb,—“The man who commits a crime gives strength to the enemy.” Like other proverbs it was destined to be too often disregarded ; but it indicated with epigrammatic force the whole policy of O'Connell. While the energies of discontent were wasted in fierce acts of revenge for individual wrong, the moral sympathy of mankind was paralysed or alienated. But if political hope could be infused into the people, the waters of bitterness might be drained into one mighty stream capable of being regulated and directed. To make good the offer, and to carry on the costly business of systematic agitation, steady supplies were indispensable. The donations of opulence would soon have fallen short, and the middle

¹ MS. letter, July 18th, 1821, to J. D. Mullen.

classes would, it was feared, grow weary of contribution. O'Connell invented a device which solved the difficulty. Membership of the association was founded on the payment of one penny a month or one shilling a year. In every parish collectors were appointed to gather from the humble and the well-to-do their common quota and to enrol the subscribers.

"The pence of the poor will do more to emancipate the peer than the pounds of the peer will do to emancipate them; for whenever a man gives his money he gives his heart; and whenever ascendancy finds that enough of hearts are beating together it will give way."

The Catholic rent was the fruit of this sagacious counsel, and by the end of 1824 it had reached £500 a week. Government became seriously alarmed. Lord Wellesley wrote to the Premier that if something were not speedily done he could not be responsible for the preservation of authority, the reins of which were slipping from his hands. Despair of redress had worked a miracle of union in the people. A bill might be framed to prohibit political societies continuing their meetings for more than fourteen days, and thus the association might be put down; but peacefully this could not be attempted unless a measure of comprehensive relief from disabilities were carried at the same time. The restrictive measure was accordingly framed by Plunket as Irish law officer of the Crown, and it led to fierce debate. Lamb and many of the Opposition forbore to interpose obstacles to its introduction, in the persuasion that it would only serve to clear the way for the measure of concession which was to follow. Others objected to shutting down the valves of popular complaint before raking out the fire of intolerance that burned beneath. Brougham, never so irritable or impetuous as when upon his legs, started at an ironical cheer from the member for Herts, on whom he turned ruthlessly, as though they had never been comrades or friends, upbraiding him with all manner of tergiversation and abandonment of the old faith as it was in Whiggery. Lamb without losing temper firmly replied:—

"That he would not have intruded himself upon the House were it not for the observation that had been so pointedly directed against him by the honourable and learned gentleman. The cheer to which he had alluded had been drawn from him for no other reason but this, that he thought the honourable and learned gentleman's language somewhat too exaggerated when speaking of the effect that would have been produced in the times of those preceding Charles II., if any persons dared talk of scruples in a high quarter. This, he thought, had tended to weaken the argument; and that was his only motive for expressing what he felt, in the usual manner, by a cheer. The honourable and learned gentleman was pleased to observe that he had tried all parties and opinions. He was not aware on what facts this assertion was founded. As he had never been one of those who despaired of the resources of the country, even when most depressed, so he did not wish to encourage a too sanguine feeling with respect

to the extent to which our prosperity was likely to go. In the one case, as in the other, he would recommend moderation, both in action and in expectation. With respect to the Catholic Association, he conceived a case was likely to be made out against it, sufficiently strong to induce him to vote for its regulation if not suppression. There were, it was true, other associations of nearly a similar description; but they differed in this, that they did not interfere in political subjects. If any assembly of persons met, and, under the pretence of seeking redress for particular grievances, proceeded to discuss the whole political affairs of the Empire, then he maintained that such a society was a fit subject for legislative interference. Again, subscriptions for particular public purposes were perfectly legal; but if he found that the Roman Catholic clergy were actively engaged in collecting what was called Catholic rent, he should say that it was a symptom to be viewed with great alarm. When it was considered that the Roman Catholic clergy claimed the power of absolution—the power of totally forgiving sins—then he maintained that their operations ought to be looked to with great caution, and only to be approved when directed to purposes purely spiritual. Notwithstanding these opinions, however, he was now, as he had ever been, the staunch friend of Catholic emancipation. Let the conduct of the Catholic Association be what it might, still he felt that all religious distinctions ought to be removed. Whenever the question came forward he should be found its firm supporter; but he could not help observing that the success of it was in a great degree endangered by the imprudence, if not the violence, of some of its advocates. It should not be forgotten that there were in this country deep and well-founded objections to that question, and that however time and circumstances might have quieted or removed those prejudices, they ought not to be aroused by any injudicious conduct on the part of those, or the friends of those, who seek for emancipation."

On the second reading of the Suppression Bill, Plunket argued that the permanency of the Association, its assumption of representative character, its activity in recruiting members, its levy of contributions, and above all its exercise of the duty of public prosecutor, rendered it a complete usurpation of the functions of executive government, without the check which the constitution had imposed upon the authority exercised in the name of the Crown, or the direct responsibility which Parliament was accustomed to enforce. This view he urged with his accustomed earnestness and energy, taking care, however, to combine with it pleadings equally forcible for the pressing need of that great measure of redress whose delay had called into existence so formidable a body. Tierney and Brougham scoffed at the policy of open questions in the Cabinet, and urged that the agitation should be allowed free scope so long as intolerable grievances were not removed. Canning argued that the duty of Parliament was to get rid of both, and to do so simultaneously. Words of revolutionary import used by O'Connell were quoted with effect in the

debate in justification of the exceptional provisions proposed ; but Mackintosh ingeniously essayed to extenuate the import of his daring language, which he described as the rhetoric of just impatience, not the logic of dangerous conspiracy. Lamb deprecated the Jesuitical casuistry which had been employed by his honourable and learned friend :—

“One thing with respect to the Catholic Association was certain,—whatever might be their intentions, they had not performed a single act which was not calculated to place all the sentiments of England in array against them. If the effect of particular expressions was to be argued, it must be considered who the parties were by whom such expressions had been uttered. Let it be remembered that the learned gentleman whose words had formed the subject of so much discussion was a man accustomed to public speaking, and, from the very nature of his profession, used to maintain a command of temper. Such an individual had no right to plead that warmth which sometimes led an inexperienced orator beyond his real meaning ; that which he had said, be the effect what it might, must be assumed to have been said in earnest and with deliberation. He had never intended, in anything he had ever uttered, to introduce discussion or parallel as to the merits of the two contending faiths ; his objection was to associations like the Catholic Association, and to the principles on which they proceeded. Was it to be endured, that any assembly should take it upon itself to open an account for the redress of grievances, and to give itself, in such a character, a permanent existence ? Some honourable gentlemen were fond of metaphor, and perhaps a lively illustration did sometimes hit harder than an argument. Some gentlemen had invented a simile for Catholic associations, calling them safety-valves by which the dangerous ebullitions of public feeling were wont to escape. But were honourable gentlemen sure that they had not mistaken the office of societies like these ; were they sure that, instead of the safety-valves which let the public feeling out, they were not the furnaces that raised it into fury ? There was already too much disposition among the lower orders, even in England, to litigation. Everybody knew that of the indictments and causes which were tried in courts if half were entirely omitted, it would be for the benefit of all parties concerned in them. But, if people would go to law and prosecute each other needlessly, at their own expense, and even to their own ruin, where would be the end of petty ill-blood and dissension, when they were enabled to do it free of cost ? What, he asked, could be more likely to effect all the mischief apprehended from the ‘Constitutional Society’ than that very Catholic Association which gentlemen were defending ? Over and over again it had been argued, by those who were the advocates of liberal principles, that it was objectionable even for the Houses of Parliament to order prosecutions, because it sent a man to his trial with an opinion in some sort already pronounced upon him. And here was a body, assembled by its own authority, taking upon itself

to order people to be prosecuted, and its existence was defended ! He (Mr. Lamb) looked at the conduct of this society, subject to the condition of the country in which it existed. Here was a confederacy, of its own motion, causing persons to be put upon their trial, and before juries taken from among a people on the very brink of rebellion : or if they were not on the brink of rebellion, they were smarting under restrictions likely to inspire them with anything rather than impartial spirit or good-will."

By a majority of 145 the House passed the Suppression Bill. The day after it was sent to the Lords¹ Sir Francis Burdett moved the second reading of the Relief Bill, which, supported by Plunket and Canning, was carried by a majority of only twenty-one. The numbers on both sides were, however, greater than had ever divided before upon the question, and the majority included, in addition to old friends, many who now for the first time voted, and of these several who hitherto had uniformly voted the other way.²

"Along with this," wrote Plunket to Lord Wellesley, "there is a general admission that the measure must ultimately be carried. The prospects now opening of a peaceful and prosperous administration of government in Ireland are of the most gratifying and hopeful character. In order to realise these prospects it is most essential that you should have the means of holding continued and cordial intercourse with the principal persons, whether lay or ecclesiastical, of the Roman Catholic persuasion. I mean this not merely with a view to the present measure, but to the effectual and tranquil administration of the general business of the country. I have heard much of the present opinions and sentiments of Roman Catholic leaders, and I have seen something of them. I believe they are, at present, sincerely disposed to support Government, and to express their confidence in, and to afford all the facilities in their power to the carrying of the present measure. It appears to me to be obvious policy to encourage these feelings and not to let the Suppression Bill assume a character of triumph over them."³

These views Plunket expounded in conversation at Lansdowne House, in presence of Lamb, Holland, Tierney, and Spring Rice, about the same time. The whole Liberal party concurred with one or two exceptions in supporting the two supplemental bills called *The Wings*, by which it was hoped that emancipation might be borne at last over the obstacles that had hitherto impeded its progress. The one was the abolition of forty shillings franchise, which had been deplorably abused for the creation of multitudes of dependent voters ; the other the payment from the Treasury of £1,000 a year to every bishop, £200 a year to every parish priest and £60 to every curate of the ancient faith in Ireland. Lord Francis L. Gower undertook the charge of the latter ; and, as soon as the Relief Bill had passed through its various stages, succeeded in obtaining leave to bring in

¹ February 28th, 1825.

² Ward to Bishop Copleston.

³ March 2nd, 1825.

a bill for the purpose. Lamb and Dudley were zealous in its favour, and hopeful that the end of controversy was nigh. But the end was not yet. The declaration in the House of Lords, of the Duke of York, as heir presumptive to the throne, that "in whatever situation he might be placed he would never forsake his father's principles, so help him God," suddenly quickened the dying embers of intolerance into flame, and put an end to all the sanguine hopes entertained of amicable compromise.

George IV., with all his resentment at the espousal by the Whigs of the cause of the Queen, and their vituperation of his own inconsistency to early promises and professions, was anxious to keep well with many of them individually, and especially those whose social ambition had its centripetal movement round Devonshire House. Lamb continued to be a favourite, and in the midst of the excitement of the Catholic question we find him dining at the palace with Lord and Lady Cowper, Lord Anglesey, and the Dukes of Devonshire and Wellington.¹

Agitation in Ireland burst forth anew. O'Connell redeemed his promise of driving a coach and six through the Suppression Act by devising a new association for charitable purposes such as were not forbidden by the statute. In 1826 simultaneous meetings to petition were organized; the Catholic rent was collected more amply, and expended more boastfully than ever; moderate men, exasperated at the fatuity that had thrown away the last chance of gracious concession, joined the movement, and the Executive was defied openly to put it down. In England there was upon the surface no ruffle of the calm that denotes the return of industrial prosperity. The panic of 1825 gradually passed away. The middle classes had betaken themselves afresh to the cumulating of profits, and capitalists to the rebuilding of fortunes. In the late eventful struggle it was felt by both political parties that they had put forth their utmost strength, and that the issue must be decided by an appeal to the people. Parliament was six sessions old; and it would be useless to re-try the cause of sectarian liberty before the approaching dissolution. The speeches of Canning and Plunket would, it was believed by their admirers, work a potent spell upon the younger minds of the community wherever access was general to the luxury of dear newspapers. The believers in Lord Eldon and the Duke of York were equally sanguine that in the counties and small country towns a fresh election would show a retrocession in the tide of liberal sentiment. The patriotism and Protestantism of the majority in the Commons were gravely impugned, and members were so pelted with reproach and taunt that some were deterred from attempting to keep their representative position, and several who ventured to do so lost their seats.

¹ This was shortly after the Duke of York's memorable speech, which his Majesty loudly complained of as disrespectful to himself, and shortly before the decisive vote of the Lords rejecting the Relief Bill.

By many in Hertfordshire who had hitherto supported Lamb he felt, after his votes in 1825, that he was condemned past all forgiveness :

For the same thing that's righteous in
The one in t'other is a sin.

Is 't not contemptible and nonsense
That bigots should be slaves to conscience ?

He would not temporise or palter ; and the only question was whether, disregarding much defection, he ought to prepare to stand another contest, which would certainly be expensive and as certainly doubtful. Apart from the Catholic Question, now complicated with that of concurrent endowment, he had disappointed some earnest Liberals by what they deemed lukewarmness in the cause of parliamentary reform. And though the Whig interest was still believed to be preponderant, his best friends could not conceal their apprehensions as to the consequence of his standing in the face of such alienation. For the borough it was said he was certain of being returned, if he would consent to change places with Mr. Calvert, who was personally popular in the county and against whose votes no objections had been raised. The subject was discussed in all its bearings by those who had his interest at heart. While pondering what to do, symptoms of increasing feebleness in Lord Melbourne threatened to relieve him from further responsibility as a representative, and warranted urgent recommendations by other members of his family that he should free himself from even the contingent liability for a great expenditure of money which might prove almost if not altogether useless. When a dissolution did not seem so near at hand, a deputation had been sent to the metropolis in search of a Radical candidate for the town. They applied to Mr. T. S. Duncombe, a man of family and fashion, who was tired of routine duty in the Guards, and ambitious of a seat in Parliament. He had some time before, at much trouble and expense, tried to win the confidence of Pontefract, and, though unsuccessful, he took expensive lessons in the art of canvassing, of which eventually he became so accomplished a master. He agreed to pay a visit to Hertford, where he quickly won his way by a charm of manner which in electioneering oftentimes goes further than more solid qualifications. This was in 1823, and he had in the interval confirmed the favourable impression then made, giving a pledge to hold himself in readiness whenever occasion should arise. On the first rumour of Mr. Calvert's intention to retire, urgent messages were sent to him recommending a resumption of his canvass, and on the 5th of September his address appeared, "assuring the constituency of his unalterable determination to give his aid at the next election in support of the sacred cause of their independence." This, it was felt, rendered a counter-declaration necessary. Mr. Lamb was then in Derbyshire, but was daily expected to return. A requisition from many of the most respectable

electors of the borough awaited his arrival at Panshanger ; and he sent next day the following reply :

“PANSHANGER, *September 10th*, 1825.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I beg leave to acknowledge having received from you yesterday morning, a letter numerously and most respectably signed, inviting me to become a candidate for the representation of the borough of Hertford, at the next general election. As this was the first direct intimation which I had received of such a proposal, it was but natural that I should wish to take a few hours for deliberation upon a step of considerable importance both to the inhabitants of Hertford and to myself.

“With respect to the county, I have every reason to expect that were I to persevere in offering myself, I should meet with a support, at least as powerful and effectual as that with which I have been honoured upon former occasions ; but at the same time the reasons stated in the letter transmitted by you yesterday are of such weight as to induce me to decline a contest. Under these circumstances, and feeling strongly how desirable it is in every point of view that the borough of Hertford should maintain its deservedly high character, by continuing to be represented by gentlemen resident in the county, I cannot hesitate to accept the offer which has been made me ; and I beg you will have the goodness to communicate to those by whom the letter has been signed, as well as to all others who have expressed themselves favourably towards me, how deeply I feel this mark of their kindness, and how much I am flattered and gratified by this testimony of their good opinion.

“Believe me, my dear Sir,

“Yours faithfully,

“WM. LAMB.”

His committee then commenced a canvass in favour of the retiring county member, and it might have been successful but for the signal popularity rapidly gained by his rival, and the adhesion of many influential supporters of Mr. Byron, the Tory member for the borough.

The position was indeed anomalous, and naturally provoked bitter taunts and lively ridicule. Family influence had hitherto divided the representation of the town ; the house of Cecil usually nominating one of the members, and that of Cowper the other. The arrangement was denounced as “unconstitutional and unjust, odious and tyrannical,” which had privately prepared the transfer of Mr. Calvert to the county, and of Mr. Lamb to the borough. The latter, it was insinuated, was moreover intended as a *locum tenens* for Lord Fordwich, who would ere long come of age. Obviously it was requisite that he should renounce at once all future claim as a candidate for the county, and this he did by issuing the following address :—

"To the Gentry, Clergy, Freeholders, and Inhabitants of the County of Hertford.

"The certainty of an approaching dissolution of the present Parliament renders it my duty to inform you that I shall not present myself as a candidate for the honour of representing you at the ensuing election. I am induced to come to this determination solely by personal and private considerations. What would have been the event of a poll it is impossible to determine with perfect certainty, but I have every reason to think, that had I persevered in soliciting your suffrages, I should have found the course, which I have pursued in Parliament, sanctioned by the approbation of a great majority of my constituents ; and amongst many reasons for deep regret at dissolving the connection which has subsisted between us, there is none which I feel more poignantly than that my opponents will thereby lose the most legitimate opportunity of arraigning my public conduct, and I the fairest occasion of defending it.

"At this moment you will allow me to recall to your recollection the address which I published after the last election in the year 1820, in which I ventured to express a confident hope that the fortitude and courage which had surmounted the difficulties and perils of the war would carry the country safely through those heavy embarrassments, which the war had left behind it. This expectation has not been disappointed ; and, though well aware that elation in prosperity is to the full as dangerous as depression in adversity, I cannot abstain from remarking to you, that the House of Commons, which is now called upon to render up its trust, delivers the public affairs into the hands of its constituents in a different situation from that in which it received them ; in a state indeed so improved, that even three years ago the most sanguine mind would hardly have ventured to hope for the amendment.

"At the same time such are the vicissitudes of human affairs, such the magnitude, complication, and diversity of the interests of this widely extended empire, that it is impossible to say how soon difficulties may embarrass or calamity fall upon us. Whensoever that hour shall arrive, I trust that the nation will be found to have learned from late experience that safety is to be sought in patience, spirit, and resolution ; in a firm adherence to sound principles and good faith ; not in measures of spoliation ; not in ill-considered and desperate projects ; still less in timidity and despondency, exaggerated complaint, and undistinguishing crimination.

"With the warmest gratitude to my friends for the firm support and the liberal allowance, which I have ever experienced at their hands ; with the acknowledgment to my adversaries, that from them I have met with nothing but fair political opposition,—I bid you farewell, and remain,

"With great respect,

"Your most obedient and devoted Servant,

"W. LAMB.

"PANSHANGER, *September 22nd, 1825.*"

Meanwhile canvassing on both sides went on briskly. Duncombe's gaiety of manner, readiness at repartee, transcendent dandyism and lavish expenditure made him the idol of the crowd. His faults were forgiven and his foibles forgotten in the vehemence of his vows to abolish negro slavery, repeal the corn laws, and obtain a sweeping measure of parliamentary reform. He quizzed unmercifully his competitor in the race as being unsound in both fore-legs ; and the usual interchange of taunts and recriminations was kept up for some weeks during which the county town enjoyed all the excitement that usually precedes an election. But no election loomed as yet in sight. Parties in the Government were so balanced, and it was so difficult to estimate the probable strength of their respective adherents in the new Parliament, that Lord Liverpool resolved to defer the dissolution until the end of another session. A truce in electioneering was therefore agreed upon, a fact which Duncombe announced to his staff early in November by declaring that the enemy had gone into winter quarters.

Towards the end of February, Hertford was astir once more with preparations for the election, which could not be much longer postponed. Duncombe rallied his partisans by a characteristic manifesto :—

“GENTLEMEN,—

“Mr. William Lamb, the county member, having, with that consistency which is so peculiarly his own, renewed those ‘scenes’ the ‘heat and agitation’ of which he had so strenuously deprecated, it becomes necessary for me once more to address you. Your firmness, energy, and courage in support of our common cause, excite in me feelings of the warmest gratitude and admiration. Believe me, your reward will not be an empty one ; you may possibly have to encounter the frowns and petty persecutions of the squirearchy, who seek to enthrall you ; you may, it is most likely, forfeit the condescending protection of noblemen, whose parliamentary influence your votes have formerly contributed to increase. But you will also have the pure and delightful satisfaction of knowing that you have raised yourselves from the ranks of slavery to those of freedom. Cast off with indignation your unworthy fetters, and raise aloft the noble and gallant banner of British independence. I am too proud of the honourable office of leading you in this glorious cause, not to feel determined to leave no effort unattempted, and to spare no exertion that can contribute to such a result,—united as we are, by the powerful ties of liberty and independence, our success is certain, and we shall, on the day of the election, read a severe lesson to those who would trample on your rights, and make you the victims of family arrangements and unconstitutional compromises.”¹

¹ To the truly independent electors of the borough of Hertford, Queen Street, Mayfair, February 26th, 1826.

Dead walls and wooden gates were decorated, as usual on such occasions, with every variety of electioneering literature, and many amusing and ill-natured things were said in speech and print by heated partisans on either side. Attacks on what was declared to be his political inconsistency, Lamb did not seem to mind ; but when it appeared to be part of the tactics of his adversaries to drag before the hissing crowd the griefs and troubles of his private life, his pride and sensibility dissuaded him from continuing the contest.¹ Having made up his mind to retire, the terms in which he announced his withdrawal confessed frankly his disappointment and mortification :—

“Driven from the representation of the county by the advantage taken of my peculiar situation by a minority of the freeholders, it would have been very grateful to my feelings, and as I view it not injurious to your character, if I had found support from you at such a period, and under such circumstances. Such an employment of the elective franchise would at least have had in it something of a lofty and generous nature. When, however, I perceived that a difference of opinion greater than I had anticipated prevailed amongst you, I took the earliest opportunity of informing my friends that it did not suit my views to run the slightest risk of failure,—that your suffrages, if spontaneously bestowed, would be received with thankfulness, and ever acknowledged with gratitude ; but that they were not to me so precious an object as to be sought and struggled for against difficulty, ill-will, and opposition.”

Looking round amongst his old supporters for some one eligible to take his place, his choice fell on Mr. Henry Bulwer, who had already shown that he possessed capability and ambition to win distinction in a different sphere from his elder brother. Two years before he had volunteered to go out to the Morea, as one of the representatives of the Greek Committee, confidentially to report to them the actual state of affairs, and to advise the bondholders in England with respect to the loan raised to carry on the war. On his return he published an amusing volume of letters descriptive of his sojourn in the classic land of conflict ; and, on the whole, gained credit by the good use he had made of his powers of observation and judgment. But his reputation as author or envoy went for little with a constituency by this time thoroughly demoralised by rancour, money, and beer. Rather effeminate in appearance and voice, and with more fine appreciation of sarcasm than capacity for rough-and-ready humour, he was never able to overtake the headway made by his dandy competitor. For a good while he was satisfied with the assurances that in the long run people would lean to a son of their own county in preference to a fancy foreigner from Yorkshire ; and what youth of political inexperience ever doubted that his first contested election might after all be won ? So he went on, reporting progress in delicate little notes to Panshanger

¹ One of the most malignant attacks of this kind alluded openly to his wife, and was subscribed “Glenarvon.”

and Knebworth, till most of his money was spent, and a good deal of the confidence of his discerning friends. Still it would never do to give in on the eve of the battle, and he persevered to the end. The Radicals pelted him with imputations of secret help from Hatfield; and the Tories were half afraid to split their votes in his favour, lest with similar help from ultra-Liberals their own man might go to the wall. In such a triangular duel he was sure to be worsted; and ere the writ came down Whiggery knew it was beaten, though it said nothing about it. Bulwer's family had long been connected with the county, and he had already given proofs of taste and talent as a writer; but these went for little in the heat and passion of a general election like that of 1826, and notwithstanding all the influence that could be brought to bear in his support, he was distanced at the poll by both competitors. A day or two before a creditor to whom a considerable sum was due threatened to arrest Duncombe; and thus prevented his showing himself in the town. A handbill appeared, containing merely the words "Where is he?" His friends all the more resolved that he should be ahead early in the day, and having succeeded in placing him there before noon, a triumphant placard was issued, "Where is he now?" The battle won, he came forth to receive more than the customary meed of congratulation. His unfastidious biographer lauds the exertions he made to win the wavering affections of the constituency throughout this protracted courtship, and then records with a brevity of candour that "Mr. Duncombe having bribed handsomely, secured a majority at Hertford."¹

The results of the general election were less favourable to the progress of toleration than its supporters had been encouraged to expect: Lord J. Russell was beaten in Huntingdonshire, Mr. Brougham in Westmoreland, Lord Howick and Mr. Beaumont in Northumberland. But in Ireland the revolt of the Forty-shilling Freeholders, till then the electoral vassals of the landed proprietary, was signalised by the return of Mr. Villiers Stuart for the county of Waterford, where the influence of the Beresford family had been regarded as supreme.

Lord Melbourne had for some time wished to dispose of a pension of £1200 a year, purchased by his father not long before his death from Lady Gower. It was the moiety of a grant in perpetuity, charged on the revenue of the Duchy of Cornwall, and, in default, on that of the Excise, by Charles II. in favour of the first Earl of Bath, son of Sir Bevil Granville, who fell at Lansdowne fight in defence of the royal cause. It was divided on failure of heirs male between his daughters, one of whom married Sir W. Leveson Gower, the widow of whose grandson sold it for £36,000 to Sir Matthew Lamb. In 1826 Consols stood at or about 75; and the Treasury offered to redeem it at five-and-twenty years' purchase. £24,000 was paid to Lord Mansfield, who held a mortgage for that amount, and the balance, £6000, to Lord Melbourne.

¹ 'Life of T. S. Duncombe,' vol. i. p. 86.

CHAPTER XII.

CANNING'S ADMINISTRATION.

Rise of Copley—Coalition—Treatment of Plunket—Dissenters' Marriage Bill—A Chief Secretary's Office—Death of Canning—Goderich and Lansdowne.

THE year 1827 was an eventful one in the personal history of those with whom these memoirs are concerned. Early in January the heir presumptive to the throne was borne to the tomb; and a few weeks later, the Premier who had held office nearly as long as Mr. Pitt was laid aside by illness from which he never rallied. The brilliant and versatile chief of the middle or transitional party had likewise in the inclement spring of 1827 threatening notice of his end; but he could not bear to put away the ambitious cup at length so nearly brimming to the full; he owed to Knighton that he had lain awake for many nights without ever losing consciousness, and felt his nervous system quivering from head to heel through the effects of calomel; yet he refused to devolve on Robinson or Huskisson the task of bringing in the promised Corn Bill; and by an effort greater than he could sustain, he performed that difficult duty to perfection. On the 3rd of March Sir Francis Burdett moved for leave to bring in the Catholic Relief Bill. Lord Elliot, for many years an opponent of concession, avowed himself a convert to its necessity. Copley, lately appointed Master of the Rolls, until he entered Parliament had been known as a Radical, and something more. To the surprise of all, he now broke forth as an enthusiast for the policy of "No Surrender." Stirred by his Nisi Prius zeal, Smithfield's embers glowed again; the Armada hove in sight; Charles IX. and his plotting mother were conjured from the dead to gaze from Louvre windows at Huguenots shot down; plots to murder Elizabeth; plots to blow up the Parliament of James; were made to explode in historic order; the trial of the seven Bishops was rehearsed; and the charter of Magdalene College put again in jeopardy; the rebellions of 1641 and 1798, and the dispensing power of royalty with the pretended air of the Stuarts, were each in turn made to pass in dread array by one who had in early life professed himself a Jacobin, and in maturer days a hater of intolerance. But in March, 1827, the Great Seal was visibly slipping from Lord Eldon's hand; Lord Liverpool was sick unto death; and the rumour gained currency, that whether Peel or Canning succeeded him, George IV. had averred that the keeper of his delicate conscience must be a Protestant. Whichever way the scales inclined, the Master of the Rolls meant to be Chancellor. If he could but persuade the King of his being sound in spiritual things, Canning must know well enough how flexible and facile he would prove in council. The rôle of bigot was a

part worth playing for one night only ; fastidious critics might condemn, and old companions stare, but he had made up his mind that it was the way to win ; and so it proved. His speech drew down many plaudits, although by not a few the framework of his argument and most of his historic illustrations were recognised as identical with those of a recent pamphlet from the pen of the caustic Prebendary of Durham.¹ Canning, in reply, could not resist the temptation of taxing him with plagiarism ; and sought to blunt the point and dim the glitter of his hastily furbished fanaticism by the long-remembered travesty of the lines—

Dear Tom, this brown jug that now foams with mild ale,
And formerly plighted to Kate of the Vale,
Was once Toby Philpott's, etc.

Peel defended warmly his learned and unlooked-for ally in the policy of resistance. Plunket, on the other hand, grappled fearlessly with the law and the logic of Copley, and by anticipation showed how readily his ill-fitting bonds might be broken asunder, and how quickly he might cast away such cords of conscience from him. In truth it was a memorable wrestling for power. The life of Lord Liverpool hung in the balance ; and no man knew for certain who would succeed him, or which policy would prevail. The Master of the Rolls had shortly before delighted the Liberals by his proposed reforms of the Court of Chancery ; and he now won the confidence of the wavering monarch by his timely trifling with " No Popery." Plunket, who had spent his best abilities and best days in hewing down intolerance, saw that its wide-spreading branches were at length trembling to their fall ; and raising his axe for a final blow, he struck as none but he could strike, even at the root. No man who heard his invective against the short-sighted folly of exclusion, his denunciation of its suicidal selfishness, his malediction of the cruelty of prolonging the fearful tantalisation of a people certain to be eventually free, ever forgot his burning words. They were his last in the Commons. For us they are unfortunately lost ; but were gratitude in the world, their worth and courage, uttered as they were in that supreme hour of national fate, would not have passed away. In a House of 548, religious liberty was negatived by a majority of four.

For some weeks George IV. tried by various expedients to withhold from Canning the long-coveted prize of life, which now he claimed as his by equitable reversion. He had served under Lord Liverpool upon the understanding that the removal of religious disabilities was an open question, and that he and those who thought with him sat in the Cabinet in all respects upon a footing of equality with those who thought differently. He would not compromise that equality by admitting their opinion on this vital point to be a disqualification for the first office in the State. His Majesty had in writing assured him that

¹ Dr. Philpotts.

in all other respects he was not only eligible, but pre-eminently qualified in his estimation. If then it was the royal will, that an anti-Catholic must be the future head of the administration, he must ask to be excused from forming a part of it. But no one would venture to try the experiment of governing with only a majority of four.

By Canning's nomination to the Premiership, Brooks's would be rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Lords Lansdowne, Carlisle and Holland, Tierney, Burdett and Mackintosh listened to the suasive voice of Brougham, and one by one agreed to enter into coalition. The Duke of Devonshire and other Whig magnates took the same view, and confidentially aided in promoting the design. Earl Grey, on the contrary, denounced the proposal as compromising the honour of the Whigs, and with him stood inflexibly Lords Althorp, Tavistock and Milton, Lambton, Hobhouse and Lord George Cavendish. Lord Althorp assembled his friends around him at the Albany, and Lord George at Burlington House, where they agreed to remain in opposition to any new Government that might be formed; placing in abeyance the removal of religious disabilities, and Parliamentary reform. Brougham, however, carried the vote of an influential meeting at Brooks's in favour of coalition, Sir Francis Burdett backing him with a paradoxical but amusing speech against the evils of over-tenacious consistency. Throughout the controversy Lamb sided with the coalitionists; but not having a seat at the moment, his opinion had less weight than many of less wit; and the public, though listening eagerly for every informing rumour, knew little of what was going on.¹

The suspense lasted to the 12th of April, when the King was at length persuaded to desire Mr. Canning to form a new administration. The Duke, the Chancellor, Mr. Peel, and four other members of the Liverpool Cabinet declined to act under him, and their places were thereupon filled by the Duke of Clarence, made Lord High Admiral, Duke of Portland, Lords Dudley, Palmerston and Harrowby, Mr. Sturges Bourne, the Marquis of Anglesey, and Copley as keeper of the Great Seal. Canning's letter offering the last characteristically ended with the words, *Philopoto non obstante*. Out of the Cabinet were the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Chamberlain; the Duke of Leeds, Master of the Horse; Mr. Tierney, Master of the Mint; Marquis Wellesley, remaining Viceroy; Plunket raised to the peerage, and designated as Chancellor of Ireland. The King was as glad to get the great tribune of the Catholics out of the Commons as Canning was to have him in the Lords. But no sooner was his patent of nobility signed, and the seat for Dublin University vacated, than his Majesty was seized by a spasm in the Irish side of his conscience, which neither vigorous nor soothing treatment could allay. He "commanded the Archbishop of Canterbury to write in his name to Lord Manners, signifying his desire that he would continue to hold the

¹ 'Memoir of Earl Spencer,' p. 174.

Great Seal of Ireland for another year, in order to afford time for placing it in proper hands.”¹ And his Lordship at once informed the Lord Lieutenant of the communication and of his resolution to comply with what he regarded as a command of the sovereign. After the Primate’s missive had been despatched with instructions to make it publicly known, its purport was intimated to Mr. Canning, who needed not this unconstitutional warning how hollow was the ground on which he trod. Without reflection or consultation, he forthwith named Plunket Master of the Rolls in England. The office, being for life, would have more than compensated his friend in point of emolument for the loss of higher dignity. The bar, however, murmured at the intrusion of one who had never practised amongst them, and that so openly and angrily that, although the Premier was unwilling to give way, Plunket declined the office, not being able to reconcile himself to act in opposition to the feelings of a great number of the profession against the appointment of an Irishman, or rather an Irish barrister, to a judicial seat in England.² Canning did all that in him lay to retrieve the consequences of a disappointment so undeserved. There was reason to believe that the octogenarian chief of the Irish Court of Common Pleas was not unwilling to resign. Mr. Doherty, a kinsman of the Premier and a favourite with him, undertook to negotiate the change. But it was not so easily accomplished; and during the doubtful interval, Croker, an old antagonist at University election, gave out that Plunket had been made a lord-in-waiting. At length the concession of a step in the peerage secured Lord Norbury’s acquiescence; and the worst judge that Ireland ever saw was replaced by one of the most upright, able, and humane.

Althorp, willing to waive his own predilections, and yielding to the judgment of the friends he loved and trusted, was ever governed by the practical desire to shape the ends of party to good purpose. He intimated accordingly his readiness to give the new administration a fair trial, though he declined to cross the floor. His father of late years seldom mingled in debate, but stirred by a sense of the importance of the crisis, he went down to the House of Lords and emphatically expressed, a few days after, his resolve to support Mr. Canning; partly in recognition of his adhesion, but influenced, no doubt, still more by personal estimation. The Duke of Clarence named Lord Robert Spencer, who had gained a high character for efficiency as a naval commander, his private secretary; the Premier requested Lord Althorp to be chairman of the promised Finance Committee.

It seemed as if the occasion that filled his party with exultation and hope was to be for Lamb one only of tantalisation and chagrin. Personally he believed that he was liked by the new Premier, and if he had kept his seat he might fairly have counted on being deemed as eligible as other men of the moderate Whig section who had experience

¹ Marquis Wellesley to Plunket, April 19th, 1827.

² Plunket to Mr. J. Lloyd, April 20, 1827.

in Parliament, good connections, capacity for affairs, and who were not distasteful to the Court. But what could he expect, standing as he did outside the lists on the eve of the race being run? Knowledge, aptitude, courage, coincidence with the Premier in opinions more than many of those who were likely to bear office,—what did all avail if he had neither a following to bring, or a vote of his own to give? In the middle of the first session of the new Parliament vacancies were not likely to occur; and if they did, who would secure him a nomination? There was in the new Cabinet one whom self-interest and good-will alike prompted to further his desires, and who had the power of so doing. His relative Huskisson was indeed more powerful than ever. There was little in common between the personal tastes and habits of the cautious financier and the frank man of fashion: but there was much in their political tendencies that since 1822 had drawn them towards each other. Huskisson, timid and irresolute by nature, had none of the accomplishments that in public or private life help to conceal defects and to make knowledge and ability go far. Beside a leader of superior genius he was invaluable. Full of information, clear in his figures as in his logic, indefatigable in research and ever ready with illustration, now that Peel had left the Treasury bench he was second only to the Premier in general estimation. He had few personal adherents, and might legitimately wish to add to their number. In the last Parliament Lamb had generally voted with him; and the exclusion of his connection from the existing House was a source of disappointment and sincere regret. If he were there again he might with confidence be relied on as a staunch supporter: if he were there again, why should he not have office? In a ministerial crisis a few earnest words frequently determine the future course of a career. Canning, who was said to have eyes all round his head, hardly needed reminding that he should direct a seat to be found for the near connection of the houses of Cavendish, Spencer Ponsonby, and Howard. Thus it came to pass that before the writ was moved for Newport, vacated by his elevation to the chief place in the Government, arrangements had been made for returning in his room the ex-member for the county of Hertford. At the general election in the preceding year, Lord Eldon's son, the Hon. W. Scott, was returned with Mr. Canning, who had had enough of the onerous distinction of representing a great constituency like Liverpool, and who wished to end his parliamentary career where it had begun. But in the altered condition of affairs the same influence which had returned him in July 1826 could not be depended on in April 1827; and, beset with difficulties on all sides, it was thought imprudent that he should expose himself to the needless risk and trouble of a contest. The Hon. A. F. Ellis readily agreed to make way for him, and he re-entered the House as member for Seaford. Lamb thereupon offered himself for Newport, and on the 27th of April was returned by a small majority. A petition was threatened, but before it could be presented he was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland.

On Canning's proposal of the newly returned member for Newport as Minister for Ireland, the King said, "William Lamb, William Lamb,—put him anywhere you like." It was in fact one of the appointments that pleased him most ; and on coming to kiss hands the felicitations of his Majesty were particularly gracious. Rather than contest Newport again, he availed himself of a vacancy made for him by Mr. William Russell at Bletchingley, for which he was returned without opposition on the 8th of May, while Mr. Scott found a congenial colleague for the Hampshire borough in Mr. Spencer Perceval.

Sir James Scarlett, who up to this time was thoroughly identified with the Whigs, became Solicitor-General ; and a further pledge of an altered policy in domestic affairs was given to Ireland by the appointment of Mr. Spring Rice as Under-Secretary for the Home Department. For several years the latter had represented the City of Limerick. His intimate acquaintance with Irish business and great facility in debate had rendered him one of the most trusted and influential members of his party. His private correspondence shows how highly his judgment and advice were regarded by the most distinguished men of his time on both sides of the Channel. A better choice could not have been made, under the circumstances, by a minister desirous of daily information on all that was thought and said regarding the Government in that portion of the kingdom, whose long alienated confidence he wished to conciliate, but whose hopes and demands he was not yet in a position definitely to satisfy.

Canning at first offered Palmerston the Exchequer ; but Croker having suggested that he might escape a contest for the University if he waited until the end of the session, it was decided that he should remain Secretary at War, with a seat in the Cabinet. He knew, however, that George IV. hated him. Why (in his Autobiography) he does not say ; but the royal dislike soon made itself manifest in a somewhat curious way. Mr. Canning sent for him, and, with evident embarrassment, explained how he feared he would be unable to fulfil his intention of promoting him to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. He said he was content with his old office, and there for the moment the matter dropped. Soon afterwards the First Minister, to his surprise, informed him that his Majesty had had reason to know that the vacant Governorship of Jamaica was just the thing he would like ; at which he laughed so heartily that Canning seemed annoyed, and did not repeat the proposal. Determined to be rid of him at any price, the King then authorized the Premier to offer him the Governor-Generalship of India, but this also he declined, as he had done when the splendid post had been suggested as a tempting object of ambition by Lord Liverpool.¹

The new administration was fiercely assailed from the outset by opposite extremes. Lord Grey in the Upper House and Hobhouse

¹ Autobiographic Sketch.

and Lambton in the Lower headed the irreconcilables of their party ; while Sir R. Peel and the Duke of Wellington lent their sanction to the bitterest attacks on the personal character and conduct of Canning. The King stipulated that the heads of the law in both England and Ireland should be men professing sentiments avowedly opposed to concession. Lamb, who understood Canning's difficulties, thought he would have been wrong had he refused to acquiesce. It was something to get Copley out of the Commons, where, with a seat for the University of Cambridge and a judicial place worth £8,000 a year for life, he might have become a formidable malcontent and obstacle in the way of reasonable progress : while in the Upper House he might more easily recant all he had said in the Lower, when the proper time came. Nor was he long in justifying this estimate of his versatility. Even in the brief remnant of the session of 1827, he threw Lord Eldon into hysterics by the philosophic radicalism of his defence of the Dissenters' Marriage Bill. All that was needed to secure the nuptial tie was publicity and certainty, and the observance of some decorous form. For the rest, one religious service was as good as another ; for the Established Church only did itself harm and made itself odious by imposing its sanctions legally on persons professing other creeds. With such a Court to deal with as that of George IV., and with a House of Commons still unreformed, it might well seem Quixotic to refuse the aid which Lyndhurst had ready to give any premier or party that wanted him. Canning persuaded his facile colleague Robinson to take a peerage and the leadership in the Lords, which he held just long enough to incur a signal though undeserved defeat on the Corn Bill. His amiable manners, conscientiousness, veracity, statistical knowledge, and familiarity with Virgil, admirable accomplishments as a subordinate debater, were worth just nothing at all for the defence of a beleaguered position and the chieftainship of an outnumbered party. Enemies he had none ; but the figure he cut as leader was simply pitiable ; and as generally happens in such cases, the only pity he got was his own ; for his friends were justly provoked beyond measure at his irresolution. Sir Denis le Marchant says : "Even upon an attack from Lord Londonderry I recollect his once bursting into tears."¹

Canning sent for Lamb on the eve of his departure for Ireland, and expounded to him the views he entertained of the transitional policy to be pursued. Emancipation was inevitable, and even imminent ; but until a government of toleration should be consolidated, it were simple fatuity to attempt its legislative enactment. The way for it must be prepared by administrative changes high and low, so that men's minds might become gradually accustomed to see the friends of toleration and, as far as a bigoted code allowed, the victims of exclusion brought into posts of influence. The Premier spoke with the unreserve of great confidence in the discretion of his new lieutenant ;

¹ 'Memoir of Earl Spencer,' p. 41.

and Lamb bade him farewell not without a certain sadness as he gazed upon his worn features and felt his feverish hand, but still with hopeful anticipation that after the recess he should find him renewed in strength and reinvigorated for the struggle manifestly in store for them. He little dreamed that he should see his face no more. After an hour spent at Lansdowne House he left town for Bocket, where he spent the evening, and then set out upon his journey, travelling by night in consequence of the excessive heat of the weather.¹

Ill-health was the sufficient cause assigned for Lady Caroline's remaining at Bocket; but it was Lamb's wish that Augustus should accompany him to Ireland. Change of scene might possibly be useful, and any break in the monotonous round of secluded life in which he had latterly spent his days could not be other than beneficial. Stronger even than these considerations was the feeling that he could not bear being long separated from the youth whom every day he regarded with more tenderness and fondness. To no one did his unuttered thoughts turn in solitude or sleeplessness so yearningly or so devotedly; and from no one did he receive wistful looks of affection and confidence so undoubted and undoubting. What would he not have gladly given to be able even to hope that the mysterious cloud might yet pass away from the face of the glass wherein he had been looking for twenty years in vain, to see his own mental image reproduced! And who but himself would take the pains to comfort and cheer the still immature mind that imperfectly seemed to grow more and more sensible of its captivity? Poor Lady Caroline's desultory fits of endearment and paroxysms of solicitude, though natural and touching, were anything but calculated to mend her son's condition, which medically required the avoidance of sudden cause of emotion, whether pleasurable or painful. It was therefore with the strong approval of his physician that Lamb took his son, as he said, to keep him company at Dublin, and to show him a number of things and places he had never seen before.

From the day he took his seat in the Secretary's Room at the Castle access thereto never was denied. His intuitive sense of what he was there to do and how it should be done prompted every look and action without formal preface, programme, or apology. Canning, who knew him well, and who, with longer and larger experience, was a still more consummate discerner of spirits, had placed him there to work out a policy of gradual change, preparatory to the ultimate enactment of justice for all. The way had to be cleared of innumerable prejudices and superstitions of misrule, which, though separately small and mean, collectively served to impede the way towards the reconstruction of society on a just and solid basis. There cannot be a doubt that ere his sun went down, the ambitious minister saw the day of justice afar off and was glad; and into the receptive ear of William Lamb he poured from time to time thoughts

¹ July 4th, 1827.

and imaginings, and hopes and plans which he dared communicate to few. Without ostensibly subverting the outworks of ascendancy, he wished to see them gradually dismantled ; without forcibly removing the old land-marks of exclusion, he would have them quietly overpassed. No written instructions could have explained all he meant should be done, and no official power of prophecy could vindicate the times and opportunities for effecting it. Discipleship was indispensable for the purpose ; and among his many personal adherents Canning had none more deft or devoted than his new Minister for Ireland. From the outset he resolved to see and hear for himself everybody and everything. The prescriptive reserve which haunted the Secretary's office he put aside with no other notice than a hearty laugh. Peel had encircled the department with an arctic zone of distrust which, save by a few adventurers, was impenetrable : Goulburn was the centre of a mere fog, without light or sound or motion. His successor came to bring brighter and more hopeful weather. The staff of the department viewed his proceedings with surprise at first, and then with sorrow. Some hinted doubts as to whether he was quite aware of the sort of persons he consented to see, and inwardly they deplored the obstinacy of his imprudence in seeming to talk to them just as he would to old acquaintances. Old Mr. Gregory groaned ; melancholy Mr. Mangin sighed ; the sententious Attorney-General, Mr. Joy, kept his mind to himself except when asked point-blank for an opinion, and then flavoured it with a sneer. The versatile Solicitor-General, Mr. Doherty, who had fought for his kinsman the Prime Minister at Liverpool elections, and hoped that he would now have his reward, was all things to all men ; and finding that Lamb loved a joke, plied him with specimens innumerable of Celtic fun. But the Secretary went his own way, and kept to it. If agitation would not go to bed, he would like to have a chat with it ; and when his disposition became known some very queer people tried how far they could presume on his accessibility : they found it was not very far. When disposed to be saucy or disrespectful, he good-humouredly but firmly pulled them up ; never snapping or bullying, but gravely rebuking or merrily laughing them out of "their damned nonsense." In a word, he had made up his mind that if he could not take care of himself, it was not worth while getting others to take care of him. His desire was to know if possible what discontents were uppermost in men's thoughts, and what vexations pressed hardest for removal. He would hear what anybody had to say, believing only as little of it as appeared to him to have reason. The messengers of the office used to say long after his time, "When Mr. Lamb was here the only orders were, Show him in : " and though he could not promise to grant one in fifty of their requests, they invariably went away in better humour than they came, and muttering as they passed the sentry at the gate, "Not a bad kind of man, that." At the end of an early letter to the Home Office full of details of business he says : "I have a dozen fellows talking to me whilst I write this letter, which will

account for its incoherence,"¹ in regard to official formalities ; for there was none as to substance and sense.

Plunket went to Ireland to enter upon his judicial duties ; and he saw Canning no more. They parted with feelings of mutual dissatisfaction. Lamb, who was the confidant of both, when recalling these circumstances some time after, wrote : " You are of course well aware that Canning was discontented with Plunket, and of course *vice versâ*."² The minister, who knew best how insecure was still his hold of power, and whose hourly care was to avoid or postpone questions which might afford pretext for quarrel to the King, feared to press anew Plunket's unsatisfied claims, and thought him unreasonable in expecting it. On the other hand, it was not the first time, unhappily, that Plunket thought he had been let down where the maintenance of his interests was in the balance. Canning, with all his great and noble qualities, had the character of being shifty and devious in his course ; most frequently by being mute where his outspoken aid was confidently reckoned on. It had been so in 1822, when Plunket's position and credit were at stake, and when he was indebted solely for his vindication and triumph to his own undaunted eloquence. And now, when he had irrevocably given up the great position he had in twenty years established for himself in the House of Commons on the explicit assurance that he should have the Great Seal of Ireland as his just reward, he found himself sacrificed to the very principle of exclusion on account of opinions, by refusing to acknowledge which in his own case Canning had become Premier. Had it only been a question of delay, the disappointment might have been easily assuaged. But Canning did not venture to hold out expectations which must speedily be dissipated. Lord Manners' stay in Ireland could not be indefinitely prolonged, and already his successor was resolved on. The choice was certainly a strange, and even by its object an unsuspected, one. Before leaving London

" I told Lansdowne that I knew whom Canning destined for Irish Chancellor, and that I thought it an appointment which he would approve. He told me that he intended Alexander, but that it was a profound secret, known only to himself, Lyndhurst, and me ; that he had not communicated with Alexander, and did not know whether he would accept the office."³

Alexander was known as a sound equity lawyer and an upright judge, but his translation from Westminster to Dublin was not contemplated on these accounts alone. Canning hoped to tempt Brougham, by the offer of the chief seat in the Exchequer, to quit Parliament, where formerly he had been an enemy, was latterly a supporter, but was certain to be always troublesome either as an ally or a foe. Brougham declined without a peerage, not choosing to be

¹ August 22nd, 1827.

² MS. private and confidential, to T. S. Rice, September 21st, 1827.

³ Confidential letter to T. S. Rice.

shelved at forty-nine, and preferring the enjoyments of popularity and the sort of power it gives to doubling his income, with judicial repose. When Lamb met Plunket for the first time in Dublin on his return from circuit, he was secretly embarrassed by knowing what was in contemplation, and fearing the chagrin its announcement would occasion to his friend; but he bears cordial testimony to his steadfastness during the period of suspense which ensued on Canning's death:—

“Plunket has been most firm and decided in his language during the whole of the late uncertainties, although he cannot feel otherwise than dissatisfied, and although, as I am informed, great efforts have been made to excite and increase that dissatisfaction. Pray mention this to Abercromby when you see him, and tell him I should like much to hear from him.”¹

Parliament was prorogued on the 2nd of July. Canning breathed more freely, and set about consolidating his long-planned edifice of power. Lord Lansdowne assumed the office of Home Secretary, Mr. Sturges Bourne being content with the Commissionership of Woods and Forests. Lord William Bentinck was named Governor-General of India. His nephew, Lord George, being private secretary to the Premier. A beginning was promptly made in breaking down the system of sectarian exclusion in the dispensation of patronage and the distribution of honours. In Ireland especially the change was regarded as significant, and to the Viceroy and his new Secretary it was the performance of a welcome duty. Huskisson, advised to go abroad, called to take leave of Canning on the 18th of July, and, struck by his altered looks, observed that he seemed like the person most in want of change of air and rest. Canning, who was still in bed, replied gaily that it was only the reflection from the yellow lining of the curtains. Huskisson sailed on the 19th, and landing at Calais, entangled his foot in a cable, and lacerated it so seriously, that he was unable to walk for several days. Lady Caroline received frequent letters from Ireland from her son, full of fondness; and from the husband, in whose new career she took no little interest, descriptive of his unaccustomed ways of official life. He had early intimation from Whitehall of the uneasiness entertained regarding the Premier's condition; but, with his habitual caution, dropped no hint of it in his letters to Brocket, lest through that quarter alarm should spread. Mr. Canning's removal to Chiswick was noticed in the newspapers without particular comment, and it was not until the 6th of August that even in private letters any serious fears were breathed of his being in danger. A note without date, probably written on the 7th, is thus explained:—

“Brocket, Wednesday.

“I have just heard to my excessive horror that Mr. Canning is

¹ Confidential letter to T. S. Rice, MS.

dying or dead. I am coming to town in consequence to know the truth, and if I can to see the Duke of Devonshire. In the meantime, will you call on me to-morrow the moment you are up, and pray let it be early. I have two or three notes from William, evidently not knowing this disastrous news."¹

At Innspruck, on the 12th of August, letters from England informed Huskisson of Canning's convalescence. He went thence to the Tyrol in better health and spirits. On the 15th, as his party were setting out for Coire, an *estaffette* from Sir Brook Taylor, Minister at Munich, brought him a letter from Lord Granville at Paris announcing the alarming turn which the Premier's illness had taken. As fast as he was able he returned to Paris, and on the 20th of August reached the English Embassy. On the way he heard the fatal news. The funeral had already taken place, and Huskisson, prostrate with fatigue and grief, remained at Paris for some time. He there received letters from Lord Goderich, urgently desiring his return, and offering him the leadership of the House of Commons; this he was assured was especially desired by the King. Why he was not placed in the Exchequer, for which he was pre-eminently qualified, does not distinctly appear. Tierney preferred the leisure and comparative obscurity of the Mint; most of the other offices remained as they were, the Admiralty continuing under the presidency, or rather the command, for so he treated it, of the heir presumptive to the throne. The Duke of Wellington consented to be Commander-in-Chief, declaring at the same time that he had never considered the office one which pledged the holder to agreement with ministers of the day on subjects of general policy. Lord Harrowby made way for the Duke of Portland as President of the Council. Lord Carlisle became Privy Seal, and Lord Holland was made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Canning's death caused no alteration in the policy on which his colleagues were agreed. The Duke of Wellington, by accepting the command-in-chief of the army, would, it was supposed, be somewhat mollified in his opposition; and Lord Grey would, it was hoped, be propitiated by the peerage promised to his son-in-law Mr. Lambton. Lord Grenville and the Duke of Buckingham sent their proxies to Lord Goderich, and the appointment of Copleston, the friend of Dudley, to the see of Llandaff gave ministers another vote among the spiritual peers. The country during the autumn was tranquil and prosperous; the revenue promised well; and except in the Levant there was no symptom of disturbance in foreign affairs.

George IV. persuaded himself, when he reluctantly accepted Canning as head of a coalition government, that he would be able to exercise more directly than probably he had ever done before personal influence and control in nominations to office. In the instance of the Irish Chancellorship he had signally prevailed; and believing

¹ To Lady Morgan, who was then in London.

Goderich to be far less capable of resistance than his predecessor, he took the occasion of a visit to Windsor to inform him that he desired the appointment forthwith of Herries as Chancellor of the Exchequer. His new minister made no objection, and communicated to Herries, on his return to London, the wishes of the King without, apparently, considering that before doing so he ought to have consulted his Whig colleagues. His Majesty thus lost no time in beginning to humiliate in order to divide the weakened Cabinet. Instead of waiting for Lord Goderich to recommend a new colleague at the Treasury, he had at once named Mr. Herries, reckoning astutely on submission on the part of the too compliant minister. The three Whig members of the Cabinet demurred to this departure from constitutional usage ; but finding their remonstrance vain, Lord Lansdowne resigned. The question with him was not new or unconsidered. He was aware of the difficulties with which Lord Liverpool had to contend owing to this disposition of the King. In 1822 Charles Grant had been summarily dismissed from the Chief Secretaryship of Ireland without any assignable cause, and with protestations by Lord Londonderry and by Lord Liverpool himself of the Cabinet's satisfaction at his conduct and regret at his removal, solely because he had been found impracticable in matters of patronage, where the nominees of the Court were concerned.¹ Such nominees were in those days a numerous brood ; and the Irish establishment had long been treated as an out-house, where they could be conveniently reared. But the Treasury, after all, was the seat and centre of patronage ; and his Majesty needed little prompting in his wish that the second as well as the first Commissioner should feel that he owed his place directly to him. Lord Lansdowne therefore, upon constitutional grounds, refused to sit in a Cabinet whose advice was not previously taken in the filling up of the greater offices. If the Premier had consulted some of the colleagues with whose opinions he had theretofore been more closely agreed, omitting all communication with those who, like himself, had entered into coalition upon a footing of equality, that only made the matter worse. He disclaimed all private or unconfessed objections to Herries, but he refused to acquiesce in a precedent so destructive of the principle of cabinet responsibility as the independent nomination of Finance Minister by the Crown. The other Whigs were prepared to follow his example, and for some days all was suspense and doubt. At length the King protested that the whole affair was a misconception, and left it to be inferred that whatever mistake had been made was altogether on the part of the Premier. He proffered the Home Secretary an assurance that he had no idea of creating a precedent, by an appointment of the kind, and made it a personal request that he would withdraw his resignation ; Lord Lansdowne only yielded, at the end of a long interview, upon condition that he should be at liberty to state to whomsoever he thought fit the reasons

¹ Letter from T. S. Rice to Lord Lansdowne, January 28th, 1822.

why he consented to resume office. The circumstances drew forth warm expressions of satisfaction and confidence from various independent quarters, and tended to establish him in a position of influence with his party, which he ever afterwards maintained.¹ Brougham was especially effusive in his praise, and more than ever sanguine of the permanency of the Government, and exultant by anticipation at the part of unofficial Coryphæus which he believed it would enable him to play in legal reform. In his other function of self-appointed mentor to the administration he took care to mingle his meed of encouragement with confidential admonitions to prudence, and pliability to the Court, sufficiently amusing :—

“What an excellent, honourable, and useful end all this has had ! I am sure Lord Lansdowne does far more good to his principles and party by giving way when the matter is so pressed, and on such grounds, than by gaining a victory dangerous to the victor and galling to, and never to be forgotten by, the vanquished. Nothing can be better, and I look forward now to amity and courtesy, and I hope kindness, prevailing with the King and our friends. They should not be outrageously proud and dignified, but think how much good on momentous questions they may do by gratifying the King and his friends in trifles. All other modes seem resorted to of furthering great objects ; this alone we always neglect. I rejoice in the prospect before us for the next session. I shall have some half-dozen reforms in our law and policy well matured, for I must avail myself of the influence my singular position gives me in the House to do permanent good—viz., all the weight of being out of place (both weight with the King and country) and the favour of the old Tory opposition, who I do not think will quarrel with me rashly.”²

His vituperation of Herries was equally exaggerated ; and the *Times* having taken a similar tone, while the *Courier* defended the favourite of the King, a polemic ensued between the oracles of the two sections of the Cabinet. Lord Goderich, much disturbed thereby, sent his private secretary, Mr. Drummond, to the Home Office to expostulate against what he supposed to be Whig instigation. The Under-Secretary disavowed any personal knowledge of the writer in the *Times*, or of any influence which might have swayed him ; but he promised, through a third party, to suggest the cessation of the strife as injurious to the stability of the Coalition ; and thereupon communicated through his friend Empson with Mr. Barnes. The *Courier*, on the other hand, was persuaded to moderate the rancour of its pen, and for a time there was peace between the journals.³

Lord Lansdowne did not consent to form part of the re-organised administration without making terms for his friends ; these are best told in his own words :—

“I have arranged, I will not say insisted, that an arrangement

¹ Letter from T. S. Rice, September 3rd, 4th, and 5th, 1827, MS.

² From H. Brougham to T. S. Rice, September 4th, 1827, MS. ³ Idem.

should immediately be made for bringing Mackintosh and young Stanley into office, so that there is respect for the past and hope for the future. Lord Darlington is to be a marquis, likewise my friend Lord Camden; the Chancellorship of the Exchequer has been pressed again upon Sturges Bourne, also upon Huskisson. It is essential that all this should be made known to justify an acquiescence which I think requires a little propping up in the public eye."

Mr. Stanley spent a few days at Bowood early in September, upon the intimation of his appointment as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, with which he was much pleased; and his official life commenced in October.

After a visit to Panshanger, Huskisson returned to Earham, where his physicians thought he must remain for the quiet and repose indispensable to his recovery. He was subsequently reported to be very low in bodily health and much depressed in spirits; and among the apprehensions which his state occasioned was the effect which his continued debility might have in the approaching session by giving greater scope and prominence to words and works of supererogation from their irrepressible patron Brougham.¹ Huskisson's health did not improve. The Home Secretary was alarmed at the accounts which reached him on the subject—"It is unnecessary to proclaim it to the profane, but we cannot disguise from ourselves that he is *l'homme nécessaire* for this administration."²

CHAPTER XIII.

DUBLIN CASTLE.

Dublin Corporation—Assistant Barristers—Police Force—Subsidising the Press—Jobbing—Post Office Abuses—Agrarian Combinations.

IT had been usual to vote the honorary freedom of Dublin to each Chief Secretary on his assuming office; but in the bitterness of party, the compliment was now for the first time withheld. At a meeting of the Common Council early in August, the proposal to follow the usual precedent was rejected upon the specific ground that the Goderich Cabinet were not to be trusted, and that their newly appointed representative in Ireland had disentitled himself by his votes and speeches in Parliament to the confidence of the Protestants of the realm. The Board of Aldermen were more nearly divided in political opinions; and on a subsequent day they agreed to atone for the affront thus

¹ Letter from T. S. Rice, September 14th, 1827, MS.

² From Bowood, September 16th, 1827, MS.

offered by appointing a deputation to wait on Mr. Lamb with a copy of an address which they desired on a convenient day to present with civic formalities. He received the deputation with due courtesy, and said he would intimate to the Lord Mayor when he should be ready to receive the address in form. It would not have been easy to give a public answer, such as would satisfy the Corporation in its querulous mood, without seeming to compromise the policy of the Government; and as nothing was to be gained by entering into controversy with a public body daily losing influence and repute, it was thought most prudent to defer the formal reception of the address *sine die*.

In July appeared the first of a series of articles entitled 'Lessons for Lamb,' written by Mr. Stanton, the proprietor of the *Morning Register*. Their object was to direct his attention to the abuses in local taxation long admitted by successive holders of power. Promises of reform had frequently been made by Mr. Goulburn and others; but these had been forgotten as soon as uttered, and the citizens of Dublin, then oppressed with assessments to the amount of over £250,000 a year, had too much reason of complaint against Government. One of the most crying of these grievances was the corrupt and oppressive mismanagement of the impost levied on house property under the name of "pipe water and metal main rates." The new Chief Secretary was counselled to make no hasty pledges of redress, but to set about the work in a workmanlike manner, and wait for popularity till the thing was done. A Select Committee had recommended all that was desired in 1822, and another in 1825 reported to the same purport; yet still the overtaxed and tantalised householders waited for a cheap and good supply of water. In reply to remonstrances often urged previously in vain, the Irish Secretary gave an unconditional pledge that all the details of local disbursements should be in future open to investigation. This was received in Dublin with a degree of satisfaction that reads to us now as painfully strange. Yet it is quite true not only that the irresponsible local officials had up to this time contemptuously refused to publish annual accounts but that gross instances of wholesale malversation were brought to the notice of the Executive without convincing them that ratepayers were entitled to have cognisance of the way in which their money was expended.

Nowhere did the ill effects of misused patronage manifest themselves more mischievously than in the demoralisation of the constabulary. Needy and incompetent men were frequently appointed to sub-inspectorships, and sometimes to higher posts, in districts where their antecedents were too well known. Abuses, both in the nature of partiality and corruption, grew apace. The chief constables were generally above their business; they lived expensively, ran in debt, and then were at the mercy of their inferiors. Spring Rice transmitted the copy of a note he had just received on the subject, omitting names, which he did not venture to insert owing to the existing state of the Post Office:—

"It is reported that ——— is dismissed. At all events he owes

more than he can ever pay, and of course cannot appear; he is now *at Paris*. — is also in debt beyond his means, and I believe — is as deep as either. The police horses, after being fed for some time on grass cut in the hedgerows, are turned out to grass where they are useless for the public service, as they are kept by the farmer in pledge for their grazing. There are now ten or twelve persons paid as inspectors and chief magistrates. If they were all changed into superintendents of districts of three or four counties it would be much more efficient with *half the number* of chief constables than the present establishment. This would create a clear saving by the reduction of the chief constables, and it would save the expense of paymasters in Dublin and pay-clerks in the counties, as the inspector's clerk could pay in every district. Many other savings might also be effected."

Lamb thought the improved condition of the country would allow of a reduction of £10,000 a year in the estimate for the mounted police, and he so reported to Whitehall. But ere the winter closed, his hope of lasting tranquillity vanished, and Tipperary became as turbulent as ever.

The Irish Secretary frequently thanks his indefatigable correspondent at the Home Office for his confidential suggestions on practical topics connected with Ireland, on many of which he confessed himself to be wholly uninformed; but it was easier to receive and read than to answer or act upon these recommendations. Some of his terse and thoughtful observations of what was going on around him are curious:—

"I am worried by magistrates, assistant barristers, etc., for the statutes; but the printer assures me that they are not yet printed in England. Pray let me know how this is. Nobody in England ever, I believe, thinks of a law till about a year after it has passed; but here they are so busy and eager for new laws that there is no satisfying them."

Disregarding precedent of failure in 1806, Plunket had advised the appointment in 1824 of a Roman Catholic, Mr. Richard Farrell, to the office of Assistant Barrister. Lord Manners and Mr. Goulburn did not approve; but they did not actually refuse to comply. There was a good deal of grumbling among the privileged majority of the outer bar at the ominous infraction of a system hitherto strictly observed. But the intruder was personally unexceptionable; and with a shrug and a sigh the deviation from orthodox rule was allowed to pass. No further attempt was then made to go beyond the pale of sectarian monopoly, or to show six millions of people whose allegiance was claimed, and whose taxes were levied by law, that their ordinary disputes in a court of justice were triable without respect of creeds: and Lamb found in Ireland but one county-court judge professing the ancient faith. His sense of right and of policy revolted at the continuance of this needless aggravation of injustice, and he recommended strongly that it should be gradually swept away. To the Home Secretary he wrote:—

“Before I advert to those subjects which you have enumerated, I will shortly mention other matters, some of which have been already brought forward under the Lord Lieutenant’s direction, and all of which are intended to be introduced in the next session, entirely agreeing with you that it will be wise to employ the present time in maturing and preparing measures, so as to have them actually in readiness by the meeting of Parliament. 1. Jury Bill.—I have received some suggestions founded on the differences between the law and the practice of the two countries, to which it appears to me that it will be necessary to advert. I have submitted the bill to the judges, and am assured by the Chief Justice that he will consider it, and give me his opinion upon it; and I will take care that any alteration which it may appear wise to adopt shall be communicated to you at a period sufficiently early to enable you to form your own judgment deliberately, and to obtain upon it the opinion of others. 2. The General Paving and Lighting Bill.—This bill, as well as the Jury Bill, was brought in *pro forma* and printed in the course of the last session, and the same course shall be pursued with it. 3. The bill for the renewal of the Insolvent Act was left by Mr. Goulburn in a complete state of preparation; but as it is a subject of great importance and great interest, on which opinions are a good deal divided, and as great abuses are said to prevail in the administration of this branch of the law, I wish to call your particular attention to it, and to beg that you will suggest any alteration which you may find calculated to obviate inconvenience and prevent fraud. 4. The bills for the consolidation and amendment of the criminal law, and the prevention of malicious outrages, are in a state of forwardness; but they require great care and consideration, the law of Ireland being in many points essentially different from that of England. Similar acts have been in operation in England during the late assizes, and it would be desirable to have the benefit and advantage of the experience which has now been had of their actual working in practice. With respect to any reformations of the law generally, it appears to me not unadvisable that this country should follow England at a certain interval of time, for the sake of experience and greater maturity of legislation. These are the principal measures not mentioned in your letter, which are at present under the consideration of the Lord Lieutenant, and I now proceed to those which you have enumerated. 1. The statutes which relate to public works.—Whatever may be the decision upon the general principle of these measures, which is a large and important question for every Government, and more particularly for the Government of a country placed in such peculiar circumstances as Ireland, it is evidently expedient to reduce to some order the statutes which prescribe and regulate this system, and which appear to be extremely confused—so much so, indeed, that I own myself unable to understand them, and to provide, as you suggest, for some methodical arrangement in the execution, and some frequent and strict audit of the expenditure. At the same time, the difficulty of effecting this

object will be considerable, and will form the main ingredient in the considerations of the wisdom of the general principle, and certainly one of the strongest objections to the adoption of it. The advancing of public money for such purposes in Ireland as a general measure originated in the severe distress of 1822. Unquestionably the works then undertaken in Ireland have been highly beneficial to the country, and have greatly relieved local distress. The extreme pressure of that crisis, however, and the great solicitude of Parliament for the immediate application of the grants to the relief of the suffering population, prevented the possibility of applying such effectual checks on a systematic plan against the danger of mismanagement and abuse, as may be provided, if it should be determined to establish a system of this description for the future benefit of Ireland. It would be well to know with certainty what has been done in England on this subject; what abuses may have been practised, and remedies applied or suggested for the future regulation of such expenditure. 2. The civil bill process is under consideration, and I am in hopes of soon having a bill in such a state of preparation as to be able to submit it to the judges for their consideration. 3. A bill has been prepared for the reformation of the abuses pointed out by the report on the office for the registration of deeds. This bill is now also under consideration, and no exertion shall be spared in order to have an efficient measure in preparation by the opening of Parliament. I cannot find that this report has been referred to the judges; certainly no opinion has been given, nor do I believe formed by them upon the subject, but before the bill is transmitted to you their opinion shall be taken. 4. Tolls and Customs.—This is a large, and, as affecting the rights of Corporations, a delicate position, upon which I confess myself uninformed; but attention shall be paid to it, and I shall be thankful for any suggestion or information on the subject. 5. Grand Jury presentments.—It is unnecessary to expatiate on the magnitude, the importance, and the difficulty of this subject, connected and interwoven as it is with all the transactions and with the whole system of the local administration of this country. Plans of reformation may be suggested by others, but it would only be deceiving you, and subjecting myself to the charge of presumption, if I were to hold out any expectations of being prepared myself to bring forward any general measure on this subject in the next session of Parliament. I am well aware that a bill has been repeatedly called for; but you are well aware that those measures which are the most loudly demanded are often found the most difficult to get adopted, and that the plan which receives the most general assent is apt to be subjected in detail to the most serious objection and opposition. I do not mean to say that some beneficial amendments may not be devised immediately, but with respect to the general question, I should apprehend that the renewal of the committee of last year would be found the preferable mode of proceeding. It is proper here to state that Mr. Goulburn, with the Lord Lieutenant's approbation, intended to have submitted the matter to a committee of

the House of Commons in the last session of Parliament as a preliminary step to the introduction of any new law. 6. The Corporate Magistracy in both countries requires serious consideration, and will, I am convinced, soon press itself inevitably on the attention of the legislature. You are of course aware of the 7 Geo. 4 c. 61, which has given the Lord Lieutenant the power of applying a remedy in cases of necessity. 7. Tithe.—The Tithe Composition Act passed in 1823, has been carried into effect in 940 parishes. The total parishes in Ireland are 2,600, and at the present time the Act is preparing to be carried into effect in about two hundred parishes. This is a copy of a return which I obtained from the office here upon my first arrival. Some further progress has been made since that time, but nothing very material. It would undoubtedly be highly beneficial to establish a still more permanent system, but considering the great progress this measure has made and is still making, and the extensive and increasing advantages resulting from it, together with the consideration that the earliest of these compositions have still eighteen years to run, induce me to submit to you that it would not be advisable to interfere further at present with this subject, which we know to be so pregnant with jealousy and alarm. An extension of the leasing powers of the Church would be highly advantageous in both countries, but the agitation of such a question at present, especially in Ireland, strikes me as liable to all the prudential objections which I have hinted at above. 8. Sheriffs.—A bill has been prepared on this subject. The abuses stated in the report are admitted still to prevail in some parts of Ireland; but those who are best informed on the subject appear to conceive that there will be considerable difficulty in devising such legislative measures as will obviate these abuses without running the risk of introducing and encouraging others. 9. Education.—This question is, as you observe, far too large for incidental discussion. It is one of great delicacy and difficulty, particularly in the point of view in which it is placed by your letters; but it has received and will receive the most anxious consideration on the part of the Lord Lieutenant. In a matter in which religious jealousy is so strong, and religious feelings so highly excited, and so many conflicting interests and passions are to be conciliated, it is impossible to proceed otherwise than with the greatest caution and deliberation. I have thus gone through very generally and very imperfectly the several heads of your letter. I will write more particularly upon each of them, according to the information I collect and the views which open themselves. No exertion, depend upon it, will be spared on the part of the Lord Lieutenant for the purpose of enabling his Majesty's Government to bring forward in a mature and perfect shape such measures as they may deem it expedient to propose; or to give a full statement of their views and intentions upon any subject to which the attention of Parliament may be directed by others. The Lord Lieutenant has seen this letter, and entirely approves it.”¹

¹ From W. Lamb to Lord Lansdowne, September 19th, 1827, MS.

A kindly and confiding rejoinder from the Home Secretary expressed his

“Satisfaction that nearly all the measures on which he had written connected with Ireland, respecting which it was desirable that some decision should be taken previous to the ensuing session, as well as others not immediately adverted to, had engaged the attention of the Lord Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary. He need not repeat that while he felt it his duty to dwell occasionally upon those points connected with the local administration of Ireland which had led to discussion in or out of Parliament, he felt persuaded they had not been overlooked in Ireland, and that Lord Wellesley and he were best able to judge of the nature of the difficulties which interfered with a remedy where the present system should be considered defective. Upon several of the measures under consideration, Rice’s experience as a magistrate and a grand juror would enable him to furnish useful suggestions, and he had requested him to write fully as to details.”¹

Throughout the whole period an active correspondence was kept up between Whitehall and the Castle ; the vigilant and suggestive Under-Secretary being full of practical information as to men and things, which he seems to have been always ready to impart to his friend. Some of the cautions and commentaries interchanged regarding the disposal of patronage, and projects of all kinds for effecting jobs are sufficiently amusing. After a long disclosure of the local abuses existing in the constabulary force, Spring Rice says :—

“I received a letter this morning that is so comical, but so instructive, that I cannot resist giving it to you. Dick Martin caught hold of Goulburn and Copley (last session) and, under pretence of assimilating the law, obtained their support of a bill abolishing the functions of coroners in civil matters, they having immemorially enjoyed a power concurrent with sheriffs in execution of civil process. I warned Goulburn of the mischief he was about to sanction ; but he was suspicious, I inexorable. I divided the House, but of course was beaten, and the bill was carried. What has been the result ? Look at the report of the Commissioners. A monopoly of injustice being given to the sheriffs, the difficulty of recovering debts has been augmented tenfold ; and to complete the whole argument by one illustration, I received a letter from a magistrate and a grand juror, a late high employé of the Government, and a near relation of a noble friend of yours and mine, of which I now give you a literal copy :—

“‘I have this moment heard that the Commissioners of Inquiry recommend that coroners should be employed as before, in the execution of civil process. Have the goodness to drop me a line to say if this is to be the case, for if it be so, all poor gentlemen who unfortunately happen to be in difficulties must fly the country. God forbid that it should be so.’”²

¹ Lord Lansdowne to W. Lamb, October 4th, 1827, MS.

² T. S. Rice to W. Lamb, September 27th, 1827, MS.

Among other subjects discussed in the confidential correspondence of this period was the pecuniary relations existing between the Government and the press. An annual vote was regularly taken, nominally for the expense of publishing proclamations in certain Irish journals; and another for printing the Dublin Gazette. Both had from time to time been questioned in Parliament, the latter as being excessive in amount, and the former as wrong in principle; but the Liverpool administration had defended the outlay as a legitimate and necessary means of influencing public opinion, and in committee of supply were always successful on division. In point of fact, the prices paid for the insertion as advertisements of royal proclamations yielded a sufficient profit to the conductors of certain favoured newspapers to sustain them with a very limited sale. One of these was the *Hibernian Journal*, which it was admitted had no circulation worth mentioning, and no contributions worth reading. The patronage of the Castle had been withdrawn from it by Mr. Charles Grant, when Chief Secretary, and the following week it ceased to appear. Other newspapers made a better show of independent existence, and continued to be recipients of Treasury pay. Spring Rice urged strongly the policy of reforming the system of Government advertisements, and of renouncing openly the idea of guiding or controlling opinion by a method at once wasteful and indefensible.

"Is this mode of influencing the press worthy or honourable, or even effectual? Does a good Government require this aid? Can it support a weak one? And, above all, does it not contain within it mischiefs infinitely greater than any it seeks to avert? The best answer to these questions is to be found in the actual condition of the press. The influence of these proclamations is so well known and admitted that the papers writing under this retaining fee have but little weight with the public. The editors, in place of thinking of the public only, worship the Castle, and then generally repay the favours they receive in adulation, base, unprincipled, and tasteless. On the other hand, the papers excluded from a participation in these profits are driven into furious discontent. The favoured few, being monopolists, consider they have a right to do as they choose, charge what they like, and the result has been a general system of jobbing and corruption. In Limerick, for example, the Commissioner of Accounts for several years reported fraudulent and unreasonable charges against a particular paper, and yet to the present time it has received the patronage of the Government. If not right, can all this be useful? The whole has produced the degradation of the press without contributing to the power of the Government. If retrenchment is to be practised, is not this one of the points on which economy and sound policy run together? The Dublin Gazette is one of those jobs producing no benefit at all commensurate with its cost, which either the carelessness of the Local Government or the ignorance of the Treasury has allowed to continue. The most effectual remedy would be to reduce the duty on advertisements, and to throw upon

all papers the necessity of inserting proclamations gratuitously. In an Irish paper of twenty or thirty years back you will find the advertisements greater than at present, though the lands, etc., to be let or sold, and the commercial transactions of the day were then less important in all Ireland than they now are in a single province. Duties on advertisements operate as a tax on the transfer of commodities, and as such are objectionable on every principle by which taxation ought to be regulated. If this be impracticable, let the proclamations be inserted only in the Gazette, and such as are locally interesting will be gratuitously reprinted in the newspapers. All this applies to Government notices in every civil and military department."¹

The letter containing these suggestions was first sent for approval to Lord Lansdowne, who replied next day :—

"I shall forward your letter to Lamb, with a line from myself. I entirely concur in your view of the course which it would be most dignified, and ultimately most useful, for the Government to pursue ; but we must hear what he feels and thinks on the subject."²

His individual assent was cordially and promptly given to the views thus enunciated, and in his reply he fully expressed his concurrence in the propriety of withdrawing the subsidies from the press.³ Nevertheless, he found the opinions even of the best among his local advisers adverse to a sudden change of system :—

"Plunket when he heard of our scheme about the press laughed loudly, and said, 'Oh, this is Utopian.' I only mention this to show you what strong possession the idea has of minds here. I am not apt to be very positive about future measures, but if I feel confident of anything, it is that taking away all the payments would not in the least diminish the strength of the Government."⁴

He had not been long in Ireland before he conceived the idea of making a personal acquaintance with some of the leaders of agitation. Sir Philip Crampton, with whose conversational talents he was especially charmed, undertook to gratify his wish by asking Shiel to meet him at dinner. The only other person invited was Mr. Blake, the Chief Remembrancer, who, though a Catholic, had long enjoyed the confidence of Lord Wellesley and Lord Grenville, and was the intimate friend of Lord Plunket. The Chief Secretary threw aside all reserve of tone, and invited equal candour. Shiel depicted as few could so graphically do the chronic sources of predial disturbance, which he argued were aggravated and heightened by the sectarian character of the administration of justice. While combating stoutly for the indispensability of maintaining order at any cost, as the first condition of legal liberty, Lamb was involuntarily moved by the

¹ From T. S. Rice to William Lamb, September 12th, 1827, MS.

² Lansdowne to T. S. Rice, September 13th, 1827, MS.

³ From Lansdowne, September 23rd, 1827, MS.

⁴ Letter from W. Lamb, not dated, but probably towards the end of September, MS.

touching recitals of wrong and oppression which daily drove the peasantry to madness ; and he disdained to hide his disgust at the manner in which criminal justice was administered by exclusive juries and a partisan bench. He began to understand for the first time in his life whence arose the anarchic sympathy with agrarian outrage which was not shown to mean or mercenary crime. Involuntarily yielding to the force of new conviction, he asked numerous questions, and listened with increasing curiosity to the details of cases illustrating internecine war between the many and the few. It happened that several of these were instances of lawless vengeance dealt out by the peasantry on process-servers, tithe-collectors or small proprietors themselves. "And why," he asked, "don't they go at the big ones?" Absenteeism answered the question in part, and for the rest the habit of going armed after nightfall, which at the time prevailed in many counties. A well-known landlord in Tipperary was commonly called the "Woodcock," because he was so hard to hit ; and other examples were supplied by Sir Philip to prove, as he said, that there was no especial tenderness shown to rank or fortune. But the significance of the question, and the tone in which it was put, were not to be forgotten. Ten years afterwards, when the minister had reached the height of power, it was recalled to his memory by Shiel.

Lamb spent but a few months in Ireland, and it cannot be said that he accomplished great changes during his stay. To him it was not given. But he did what he could. He visited the Four Courts Marshalsea, then the Dublin Debtors' Prison, which was at the time singularly unhealthy and ill-regulated. Spendthrifts who had lost caste in society, speculators who had gone half crazed with their schemes, bravos of old descent and ruined fortunes, who were fond of boasting of the real or fabulous deeds they had done, and litigants whose pertinacious seeking for justice had brought them to beggary, with a crowd of obscure and wretched victims of misery, dwelt together, each as he chose, or could, in every variety of defiant jollity and wan despair. Certain reforms had been not long before carried into effect ; and he expressed himself satisfied with the improved discipline and cleanliness which began to be visible ; but he thought the whole system bad and requiring thorough change. One thing he did accomplish, namely, to abolish the weekly rent paid by debtors for their miserable unfurnished rooms ; "this, as well as being a great relief to poor persons, would, independent of its consideration in a pecuniary point of view, compel the authorities to classify the prisoners."

From the time of Lord Cornwallis, jobbing in every department of the public service had continued to be regarded as a perquisite of nobility and gentry, which it was a mere vulgar affectation to disguise or deny. Church dignities, judicial appointments, cadetships in India, places in the excise, post office, and police, formed the recognised staple of the wholesale and retail traffic carried on with Government. Peers and members of Parliament, prelates and ladies of fashion par-

took the richest fruits of the field of patronage ; country gentlemen of influence, advocates of note at the Bar, and trusted officials of more or less weight, gathered the gleanings and found them ample. Not only the prevalent feeling, but the almost invariable tone of application for employment and promotion implied the absolute belief that nothing was given away except by favour. Fitness or unfitness was hardly worth talking about. To carry the Union the country had been drowned in corruption ; and the pestiferous flood, though gradually subsiding, still overspread the land, and stifled the growth of self-reliance, of merit, and of industry. Demands of the audacious magnitude which Lord Castlereagh was instructed to grant, and Sir Arthur Wellesley somewhat later thought it expedient to palter with, had become rarer in the days of their successors in office ; Government in a certain sense had bought up the privilege and power of many great families to be troublesome ; the market had grown flat, and only now and then, or here and there, booty on the old scale could be wrung from economising imperialism or irresolute viceroyalty. Lord Wellesley had striven at the outset to assert his right to the more valuable appointments civil and ecclesiastical, and when his peculiar domain was encroached upon by Downing Street he tried hard to preserve a veto. Towards the end of his pro-consulate even this was frequently infringed ; and the place hunters of high and low degree learned more and more to look to London as a true and higher source of all quarterly blessings. Lamb was not long in Ireland before he felt the pressure of influence thus exercised or attempted through his colleagues in England. Unacquainted with the personal character of nineteen out of twenty applicants for favour, and indisposed by temperament to think ill of persons without specific cause, he would have easily become an assenting party to many bad appointments, had the Home Office been in other hands. One of the best consequences, however, of his intimacy with Spring Rice, and his confidence in Lord Lansdowne, was that from time to time he was kept aware of predatory designs upon the Irish Executive ere they came ostensibly before him. A confidential letter from the Under-Secretary on the 15th of September contained an intimation that Lord ——— wanted a piece of preferment of more than ordinary distinction ; and as he was an hospitable, busy, talkative, and not very scrupulous individual, who had no other claim on the consideration of Government than the vague fear that he might be able to exercise some power of annoyance in case he was refused, Lamb laconically replied, “ I have never heard of the application, and you may depend upon it, if I can help it, it shall not be done. G—— indeed ! not if Lady G—— should,” etc.¹ Far greater was his consternation on receipt of the further warning which his brief epistle had evoked. To the Irish Secretary, hitherto incredulous as to the system of espionage carried on, Spring Rice wrote without reserve, “ What would Lady G—— say if a copy of your letter was sent to

¹ T. S. Rice, September 19th, MS.

her?"¹ Certain information had reached the Home Department that the Post Office was not to be depended on, where letters to or from official persons were concerned. The local staff in Ireland consisted almost exclusively of the dependants of the party theretofore in power; and a common instinct inspired them with apprehension, lest in the consolidation of the new Government not merely the empire should be ruined, but their special monopoly should be broken up. Fresh indications that letters from the Castle were tampered with early aroused the suspicion of the Under-Secretary, and at length on the 24th of September he wrote privately to his chief, who was then at Bowood:—

"It is quite clear that the seals of Lamb's last three letters have been broken at the Irish P.O. This I knew to be suspected; but the appearances of the last speak for themselves, and I have written to Lamb on the subject. I shall direct three or four small boxes to be prepared for the Irish correspondence, as it would never answer to have the correspondence between this department and the Castle, examined by the Orange clerks at the Post Office."

At length even Lamb's good-nature could no longer keep its eyes shut to what was going on around him:—

"You frighten me out of my wits about my letters, not so much for what may have been in them of a public as of a private nature. Did you get a line in answer to yours about G——? I hope they have not sent a copy of it to her ladyship. When I first came here I was told that malpractices took place at the Post Office; but my letters seemed to go so safe, and yours to come, that I gradually lost all distrust, and, I must say, I have never observed anything in the appearance of the letters from England to excite the least suspicion. By asking at the Irish Office you may see our keys; they are quite different from those of the Cabinet. When I got your letter yesterday morning, I sent for Lees, but, upon second thoughts, I considered it best to say nothing to him about the matter, as it would give alarm and induce caution. If such things are done it is best that they should go on in order that they may be detected."²

Later on he was again assured from the Home Office that the seals of his letters were tampered with frequently; luckily, the one about which he was most uneasy had escaped. On examination, the locks of the Irish Office boxes had been pronounced worthless as a preventive against furtive prying; the new ones, it was hoped, would prove more reliable. How to effect a discovery was the puzzle.

"In the old times the practice of opening letters at the Post Office was adopted, I believe, for the convenience of the Government, and, like every other bad measure, it recoiled on its authors. Forbes, one of Grattan's friends, wrote during the critical times of the Regency, and concluded by saying: 'I would tell you much more, but, at this

¹ T. S. Rice to W. Lamb, September, 1827, MS.

² W. Lamb to T. S. Rice, September 27th, 1827, MS.

moment, that old rogue John Lees is reading every word of the letter.' The prudent course is the one you have taken, to lie by and watch. Send the letters you despatch from the Castle or Park in some *safe* person's keeping. It has been suggested that it is in that part of the journey that the mischief occurs."¹

Later on renewed uneasiness was felt at Whitehall owing to the renewed proofs of malpractices in the Post Office; and various suggestions were made for detecting the offenders:—

"Have you any police person you can rely on? If not, shall we send you a Bow Street officer? Turn this in your mind, for be assured treachery is somewhere latent about you, and presents an example of the entire Irish system."²

But the Irish Secretary was not to be easily scared or drawn into departing from the characteristic bearing and demeanour by which through life he was distinguished. Keenly susceptible of reproach, and femininely sensitive to misconstruction, his sagacity and his pride equally concurred in forbidding him to betray the pain or uneasiness he suffered. What casual observers set down for indifference was in truth but the consistent adherence to his notion of what became a public man, in whatever circumstances he might be placed. To wince when hurt in presence of the crowd was in his view weakness unpardonable; to countervail artifice and to baffle attack he would listen to any suggestion, and resort to any legitimate means; but to show uneasiness, or to confess being out-witted, was in his mind to prove incapacity for the conduct of affairs. In great things and in small he pursued the same line of what seemed to be *insouciance*, sometimes haughty, sometimes jocose, but always perplexing to adversaries and reassuring to friends. His reply to the recommendation above noted was in this vein:—

"With regard to the letters you suspect to have been opened, recollect the absolute necessity of precision upon such points; the extreme difficulty of proof, and the manifest absurdity of stirring in such a matter with the least chance of failure. Recollect that these letters have passed through both Post Offices. The letter dated the 28th, though it bore the post-mark of the 29th, I wrote here late at night, and sent it into town in the morning by the messenger, which accounts for that circumstance. You say that the seals and covers establish beyond all possible doubt the fact that both seals had been broken. Now upon inspection it does not seem to me that there is the least appearance of either of them having been *broken*. They have been torn and cut round, but neither has been broken; and if I produce these covers and seals, all they will have to say is that they know nothing about it, and considering the variety of hands they have passed through since they were in the Post Office here, it will be quite impossible to fix anything in the shape of proof upon any individual

¹ Letter from T. S. Rice, October 2nd, 1827, MS.

² Letter (secret) from T. S. Rice, October 29th, 1827, MS.

belonging to that establishment. I will send by the post to-morrow two letters to you and two to Lansdowne—that inside with a cross × on the outside. Observe in what state they come ; do not open them unless they appear to have been untouched ; return them in the state in which you receive them. If you do not receive them at all let me know.”¹

Next day he wrote :—

“ It is impossible for me to judge by the state of the covers after they have been opened, whether they have been meddled with or not. It is a strong circumstance that you who see them as they arrive think that they have. But are you sure, after all, that it is not the badness of the sealing-wax, and my careless manner of folding and sealing a letter, for which I was always famous ? Do you judge by the crease across the seal ; and if you do, may not that have been occasioned by my tearing a sheet of paper for a cover, and in folding it, allowing the rough, torn edge to remain outwards ? The person who manages the English (branch of the) Post Office here is Mr. Homan, who was connected with Sheridan,² professes himself a great Whig, and is always trotting about the office with plans of economy and amendment. I know if I mentioned the matter that the blame would very probably be thrown upon him. . . . I do not at present think that there is sufficient evidence to make it prudent to stir. All the letters from England have reached my hands with the utmost punctuality and without any appearance that could create the least suspicion.”³

Curiously enough, at the very moment that his sense of fairness was desiring that it should be borne in mind how many hands each confidential letter passed through on *both* sides of the channel, Lord Lansdowne was expressing serious doubts whether his communications between Wiltshire and Whitehall were secure from furtive inspection :—

“ I have thought it right to write to the Chancellor (as he sent me all sorts of civil messages about it) to thank him for the Lord-Lieutenancy, and I have enclosed my letter to you, with an address to the King to be sent in by you, as I am not certain whether, if I sent it into the post here, it would go properly.”

“ On the 17th October, being public quarter-day, it was proposed by Mr. Jno. W. Pasley (Coroner of the County of Dublin) that the freedom of the Guild of St. George should be presented to the Right Hon. W. Lamb, which motion was carried unanimously ; and that the Master, Mr. Alderman Harty, the Wardens and Committee of five, should wait on him.”⁴

Towards the close of his term of office Lord Wellesley took less and less share in the details of administration ; yet his habitual susceptibility, ever on the watch for neglect or slight, occasioned him much unnecessary pain, and kept him in a state of nervous irritability he

¹ From W. Lamb, November 2nd, 1827, MS: ² His private secretary in 1807

³ From W. Lamb, November 3rd, 1827, MS. ⁴ ‘Freeman’s Journal’

could not conceal from those around him ; sometimes, not even from strangers, when guests at his table. The activity of his Chief Secretary, his readiness to hear all species of complaint and to discuss openly any fair means of redress, still more, the value set upon his ability and discretion by members of the Government who corresponded with him aggravating the besetting infirmity of the Viceroy's character, which was undoubtedly the envious greed of official fame. Lamb saw through and through his weakness, and being as much exempt from it himself as any man of high ambition ever was, he strove to avoid, as far as he was concerned, giving him any cause for jealousy. When despatches came from the Home Office, implying by their language that his independent opinion and advice was desired by the Cabinet upon matters of importance, he privately remonstrated at their erroneous form, and offered to send them back in order that they might be re-written.

"The words 'and of yourself' should, I apprehend, be omitted. There is, I believe, no such thing as an original public correspondence between the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant and the Secretary of State. Everything that the Chief Secretary writes is commanded and directed by the Lord Lieutenant. Some jealousy has already been excited upon this point, and I am afraid of more. If you agree with me in this, and think it absolutely necessary, send other letters. But, perhaps, as the man is so near his end you may let him expire in peace ; and, if his office could expire with him, so much the better. He talks of leaving before Christmas, and has written to Lord Anglesey to know when he means to arrive."¹

Soon after the failure of the ill-advised attempt to prosecute O'Connell for his allusions to the triumph of Bolivar, Plunket, writing confidentially to the Duke of Buckingham, accompanied his regret at the violent language of the Catholic leaders in Ireland with expressions of his belief that they had little less effect in stirring the popular mind than in exciting hostile prejudices in England. One of our great misfortunes is that we have not any regular and safe channel of communication with the Roman Catholic body through whom admonition and private remonstrance might effect a useful purpose. This is one of the principal reasons why I have always been so anxious for a settlement with the Roman Catholic Clergy.² The memorable attempt to realize that favourite dream of all the Liberal statesmen of the time failed, and a new penal statute was passed in 1825 to suppress the Catholic Association. The bitterness of tantalisation was added to that of hope deferred ; and the Government did not venture to put to proof the metal of the new weapon they had forged. The business of agitation went briskly on, and alarmists grew hourly more convinced that a sanguinary insurrection was meditated, and that the forfeited estates were in jeopardy. How little such designs were

¹ Letter, November 11th, 1827.

² 'Memoirs of Court and Cabinet of George IV.,' vol. ii. p. 194.

harboured by the chief demagogue is evidenced in a letter addressed by him to the Attorney-General under the seal of confidence :—

“ I regret that I feel it a duty to inform you that the accounts from the country by those who are well-acquainted with the people are terrific. The Ribbon connection has assumed a new form. There is now no oath, nor any very distinct assertion of object. It is spreading fast through Leinster—in the southern counties almost as much as in the northern. It has got extensively into Connaught and Munster. It has its origin in the north. The Orangemen of Cavan and Fermanagh have armed themselves with daggers of about fourteen inches in length in the blade, or, what is nearly as bad, the lower orders of Catholics have been made to believe that they are so armed, and in consequence of such report the Ribbon-men are getting similar arms. It is sought not to involve the married men in this society, but *all* the unmarried peasants are expected to be in it. One priest assured me that no less than seven youths in his parish, of regular habits, left his confessional rather than renounce the system, or abstain from supporting it. I have no remedy to suggest save the increase of the King's troops in Ireland. The exhibition of such a force may alone do good. The Yeomanry are worse than useless. I have done my duty in communicating these facts to you. Those who gave this information cannot be deceived, and are themselves greatly horrified. The diminution of the currency in both countries will certainly create still greater distress among our landholders, and, of course increase the tendency to Whiteboyism of every species.”¹

There was in his mind at all times a detestation of secret societies and acts of violence against life and property. Political exclusion and religious outlawry he was fearless to denounce and deride ; but those who knew him best, knew how powerfully and how sincerely his influence would have been exercised on the side of order and law, had not authority spurned his service and impugned the loyalty of the creed he held. It was, in theory, the maddest of mistakes ; in practice, the most impracticable of impolicies.

The New Chief Secretary had been thoroughly imbued with these views by Plunket and by Canning. Like the latter, he appreciated the tenacity of the prejudices to be overcome before emancipation could be carried ; but, unlike the latter, he was hardly fitted to realize the fact that every year's delay in conceding what was inevitable, lessened the chance of its producing peace, or eliciting gratitude when it came. Plunket confessed, when asked his opinion by Canning, late in 1826, that

“ He was not as sanguine as in 1825 of the efficacy of the Roman Catholic measure in tranquillising Ireland, and every year more of postponement made him less so. He, at the same time, seriously believed that the measure, if soon carried and honestly acted on, would give a fair chance of tranquillity. And until it took place the task of governing Ireland and administering its laws would become

¹ Letter from O'Connell to Plunket, March 7th, 1826.

every day more difficult. The new Catholic association completely identified itself with the old, and daily violated the recent law for its suppression. Not to prosecute its leaders was a mark of weakness ; to prosecute them would be very indiscreet, and probably unavailing ; it would be in truth to prosecute the Roman Catholic people, who from head to foot made common cause with them. So long as there was profound peace things might drag on in that way ; but, come war or rumour of war, and who could answer for the consequences." ¹

It was not surprising that a man of fashion, hitherto unused to business and wholly unacquainted with the perplexed and troubled country he was sent to aid in governing, should not easily be persuaded of the intensity of the evils thus depicted with the power of a master whose life had been spent in the study of them. His admiration of Plunket's abilities, and sympathy in his scorn of vulgar applause, led him to rely upon his judgment more than that of any other man. As for himself, he was open-eyed and open-eared to the complaints of the weak and expostulations of the unprivileged, candid in admission and outspoken in rebuke of domineering wrong, as none of his predecessors had been. The banter and even *brusquerie* of his manner rather tickled the fancy of a people with whom raillery and quizzing is an habitual condiment of thought and speech. They hated Goulburn as much for the melancholy literalism of his talk as for the sentiments it conveyed. They thought Mr. Lamb a jolly sort of fellow, who looked as if he was given to mirth and took real delight in laughter. The Celts, moreover, are apt to be taken with a fine face and fine person ; and if they must be ruled by some one from the other side of the channel, it was a comfort to think that he was not afraid to ride at his fences, and that he was an uncommonly handsome man.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE IRISH CHANCELLORSHIP.

Plunket—Sir Anthony Hart—Catholic Magistrates—Schools and Asylums—O'Connell's position—Perplexities of patronage—Agrarianism—Retirement of Lord Wellesley.

IN Plunket's disappearance from the scene of his triumphs—the greatest triumphs of argumentative eloquence won by any man of his time—the cause of religious liberty sustained a heavier loss than any

¹ Letter from Plunket to Mr. Canning, October 10th, 1826.

it had suffered since the death of Fox, just twenty years before. Grattan, Mackintosh, Burdett, and Brougham had each and all laid splendid offerings on the shrine; but the shrine was the shrine of party, and they made no sacrifice in what they brought there. It is no disparagement of their wisdom or their worth to ask what else as party men they could do. Whig traditions and Radical theories, the interest of opposition, and popular expectation out of doors, all alike pointed the same way and promised the same ready, constant and inspiring applause. Plunket had from first to last little feeling as a party man; and probably no man of eminence had so little of party sympathy or party support. An adherent of Lord Grenville, he sometimes co-operated with the Whigs and sometimes differed from them; but during his five years Attorney-Generalship he was alternately brought into antagonism with the followers of Eldon and the admirers of Grey; and neither spared him in the vehemence of their attacks. Without a relative or connection in Parliament, without a house in London, and without leisure or opportunity to cultivate social intimacies or disarm personal misapprehensions, he held his own undauntedly against all odds, and wrung simultaneously from adversaries and allies tributes of homage unlike those paid to any other man. Peel, from whom he differed daily and differed sharply as to the whole course of Irish administration, stated that his speech for Catholic emancipation in 1825 was the highest display of reasoning and declamation which he had ever heard. And Mackintosh, when asked who had done most for the cause of religious freedom, answered, unhesitatingly,

“Plunket; for all the rest, Grattan, Sidney Smith, O’Connell, spoke what enthusiastic sympathisers already felt and were eager to applaud, while he wrestled with the strongest prejudice in its strongest hold, and by dint of his resistless power left it weakened and prostrate so that it never was the same again.”

The late Lord Fortescue, when asked what he thought of him as compared with his eminent contemporaries, said,

“The difference was one not of degree but of kind; it seemed as of the very nature of the man; all the others made you feel that they were doing their best—with him it seemed as if he was taking no trouble, and could do even better if he liked.”

A friend quoted this fine criticism in conversation with Lord Russell, and asked if he thought him so transcendent in debate?

“That, he replied, is the only phrase that properly conveys my impression of his power: he was not measurable by other men, he was above them all.”

It may easily be conceived how desirous the new Chief Secretary was to have the benefit of Plunket’s long experience in Irish administration; and how anxiously he looked for occasions to consult him confidentially in the progress of affairs. But the opportunities did not readily present themselves. During the autumn, Plunket betook himself to Old Connaught, his favourite residence on the confines of

Wicklow, not far from Tinnehinch, where his illustrious master in politics spent the evening of his days. In the enjoyment, hitherto untasted, of leisure, competency, and freedom from professional anxiety, the new Chief Justice might be pardoned for resigning himself to repose ; and except during ordinary visits they saw little of each other. When winter came the business of the judicial bench did not so absorb time or attention as to prevent Plunket affording Lamb the benefit of his experience on various questions which the former had left ripe for legislation. But symptoms of creeping paralysis were already felt in every limb of the doomed administration. The Home Secretary was well-disposed towards every suggestion of remedial legislation ; and the Viceroy was willing as ever to forward and enforce a policy of progress. But in Mr. Joy the Irish Executive had a law-adviser-in-chief who cared for none of these things ; and in Mr. Gregory, an Under-Secretary whose capacity for obstruction nothing less than the indomitable zeal and determination of Plunket had been able to overcome. When the Chief Secretary asked why a measure could not be framed to remedy some practical grievance of tithe, church-cess, sub-letting, or education, he was encountered with a blinding shower of difficulties and doubts which he knew not how to meet or to escape. In answering deputations his natural quickness and sagacity showed him the way to conciliate irritable complainants, and his frank admission of what he felt to be practical wrongs won for him golden opinions at the time, and laid the foundation of personal esteem and liking not without subsequent results. But in conclave at the Castle he soon found himself at helpless disadvantage. Ignorant of details innumerable of law and fact, he was surrounded by officials exulting in their riddance of him, who was so long their plague,—and chief adversary in maintaining intact the old order of things : while from Lord Goderich he could get no exposition of an Irish policy, for policy he had none to expound.

The idea of promoting Alexander had not been laid aside. The first reliable intimation of its probability was conveyed to Plunket by Lord Holland :

“The present Government, I believe, means to name Alexander Chancellor of Ireland. I need not tell you that no appointment to that office *but one* can give me any perfect satisfaction or real pleasure ; but I suppose the impracticability of that one being granted, and the reasons of it being known and submitted to, one must consider Alexander as something better than one had a right to expect. His opinions are *bad*, but his age and habits disqualify him, and his character, temper and moderation, rescue him from becoming either the leader or tool of any active faction. At least he is better than Saurin, and I believe a great push was made by Lord Manners to secure the seals devolving on him, a true descendant of the Orange line.¹

¹ To Lord Plunket, August 23rd, 1827.

Lamb's sagacious perception of the susceptibility of others, and his freedom from the vanity of being thought better informed than his departmental chief regarding the views of the Cabinet, is indicated in a short note written on the first appearance in print of Alexander's probable appointment :

"Pray remember my hint about informing Lord Wellesley of it a day or two before it actually takes place, or rather before it is known from authority ; also a line to Plunket, and that from as high authority as possible, would I think have a good effect. Plunket, as you know, has behaved very steadily and handsomely."¹

The Home Secretary suggested accordingly that Lord Goderich should write to the susceptible Viceroy on the subject of the Chancellorship ; but he thought it as well that it should be known in Ireland that the appointment was offered to the Chief Baron by Canning before his death, though no answer was received from him till afterwards ; so that Plunket was set aside before, and not as the act of the new Government.²

Plunket made no secret of his chagrin when communicating confidentially with Spring Rice :

"I was not aware till very lately, and that long since Canning's death, in consequence too of a letter from a private friend not a member of the Government, of any application at all having been made to the Chief Baron, nor had I any reason to suppose that he was in contemplation. When the place of Master of the Rolls was offered to me, it was accompanied by a distinct declaration that my claims, whatever they were, were to remain unaffected by that appointment ; and the same assurance was distinctly repeated when I was appointed to the situation which I now fill. I was fully apprised of the difficulties which stood in the way of my appointment to the Great Seal. I have not the slightest doubt that when Canning made the proposal to the Chief Baron, and when the present Cabinet adopted it, he and they acted under an impression that those difficulties were insuperable. I need not assure you that even were my conviction on this point less decided it should not make any difference in the cordiality with which I regard the interest of the present administration, and with which I shall support them as far as the duties belonging to the office I fill are not incompatible with any interference in politics."³

To the Home Secretary he wrote, earnestly deprecating the appointment of any person on that side (of the channel) but himself, which made the case of the Irish Seal sufficiently embarrassing to those that had to determine upon it.⁴

The Chief Baron finally made up his mind that he was too old for transplanting if he was to bear any further fruit, and another occupant of the Irish Woolsack had to be sought for in Lincoln's Inn. An

¹ To T. S. Rice, September 4th, 1827, MS.

² Lansdowne, from Bowood, September 9th, 1827, MS.

³ From Lord Plunket to T. S. Rice, September 16th, 1827, MS.

⁴ Letter from Lansdowne, October 16th, 1827, MS.

announcement of the fact appeared upon authority in the morning papers :

"We can state on the most undoubted authority that the chief Baron Alexander does not proceed to Ireland as Lord Chancellor of that country. An objection is known to exist to Lord Plunket in a certain high quarter, arising from his strenuous advocacy of a cause with which the name of that eminent man is inseparably associated. The present probability as to the person who is to be appointed the successor of Lord Manners is, that the important office will devolve upon Mr. Burton, a Puisne Judge of the Court of King's Bench. The character of this gentleman is, that he is 'learned in the law,' and *præterea nihil*. He is neither a bigot nor a liberal, but in such a country as Ireland occupies the insipid station of a neutral.—*Morning Chronicle*."

Lord Goderich could not make up his mind, on the refusal of Alexander, to whom the Irish Chancellorship should be given. Late in October nothing had been settled. Feelers had been thrown out in semi-official journals that Mr. Justice Burton might be advanced to the Woolsack ; but Lamb, who was in constant communication with Plunket, wrote saying that he would take the promotion of any of his colleagues on the common law bench as a great aggravation of his own exclusion. In England his jealousy on this score does not seem to have been appreciated. His objection was in fact ascribed to a morbid desire that if he could not himself have the chief prize in his profession it should be given to an Englishman, as it had generally been, in order that his exclusion might ostensibly rest on national, but not personal grounds. The question was pointedly asked, "Why did Plunket feel so utterly averse to an Irish appointment? Does he ever regret his decision respecting the Rolls? Could he be induced to reconsider it? The Bar here are thoroughly ashamed of themselves. He would be hailed with acclamation. He would be truly in his own country. Being placed here he could most advance her interests, and his summers might still be spent at Old Connaught as before. Pray give me a line *in secrecy* on this subject, which is most material."¹ By return of post he received a reply that Plunket was by no means confiding or communicative regarding his own affairs.

"Though he always speaks very favourably of me, he always appears to be peculiarly distant and reserved. This may possibly be my own fault ; but however that may be, the natural consequence is that I know very little of his views, objects, and intentions, except from others, which mode of information is always liable to error and misconception. I understand his present language to be that he trusts that whosoever they appoint they will not insult him by the appointment ; and that his explanation of what he should consider as an insult is the appointment either of an individual of the local Bench or Bar, or of an individual of the same political opinions as his own ;

¹ Letter from T. S. Rice, October 20th, 1827, MS.

meaning, of course, by political opinions the Roman Catholic question. Now it seems to me the first of these objections is absurd ; and the second something worse. In the first instance, it would be impossible to conclude that any one who was placed in this situation was therefore considered to be of inferior character and ability ; and in the second, he prefers his own personal feelings to the furtherance of that cause which is identified with his best thoughts. However, it must be recollected that I have not heard these sentiments from himself, and therefore I may be in error respecting them. About a week or ten days ago the Lord Lieutenant, who, as I have already apprised Lansdowne confidentially, is extremely discontented and anxious for anything that would make a general move in which he might possibly find a place, wrote to me, certainly under the influence of one of those sudden accesses of violent feeling to which he is particularly liable, that he was in the highest degree alarmed at the report of the Irish Seal being intended to be bestowed upon Mr. Anthony Hart, that it was an insult to the Bar and the nation, etc. At the same time he sent an express to Lord Plunket, who went down to him immediately. After this interview he wrote to me, in a comparatively calm tone, that Lord Plunket did not feel himself peculiarly hurt by the appointment of Mr. Hart ; and that though he himself thought it most objectionable, and that it was miserable weakness in the ministry not to insist upon the nomination of Plunket, still, under the whole of the circumstances, he should not now feel himself called upon to interfere, and there the matter ended. I quite agree with you generally, that it would not be justifiable to hazard the existence of the Government upon the point ; besides, it having been conceded by Canning, it appears to be hardly fair now to press it, if the objections continue. It is almost superfluous to say that it is necessary to have a man of stability and who knows his business, and one of whom it is possible to say something beforehand, and to feel secure how he will turn out. Unfortunately, most persons are very sure at the present moment that the claims of the individual in question are in point of ability paramount, and form an exception to general rules ; otherwise, I should say that the reasons in favour of Hart preponderate very strongly ; and this must, I believe, be the opinion and feeling of the most able and best judging here. I am aware that that opinion is very much encouraged by the state of parties here. One party hates the other so cordially that they had rather see a negro promoted than one who is opposed to themselves upon the politics of this country. I think, if you consider, you will feel it to be almost impossible that Plunket should ever alter his decision with respect to the Rolls—to take it once, to give it up, and then to take it again, would be such a series of vacillations, and would expose him to such ridicule, that I think he could hardly do it. I am going down to-day to the Lord Lieutenant's, to stay with him at his country-house until Wednesday ; and I shall probably hear from him all that passed at the interview which I have mentioned in the former part of this letter. After all, if Burton is the individual the Govern-

ment have in view, I do not think much objection would be felt in any quarter ; but do you not think it would be better if I were to communicate openly and distinctly with Plunket upon the subject ? To do that with any effect I must of course be fully informed of the intentions of Government, and the course which is intended to be taken.”¹

Sir Anthony Hart, who for some time had been Vice-Chancellor, was actually appointed before this letter reached London. He stipulated expressly “that he was to have no politics, general, local, or religious ; and that of Papists or Orangemen he was to know nothing.”² The Under-Secretary at Whitehall told his colleague at the Castle that he got Lord Dudley’s signature to the letter of appointment to save it a journey to Bowood ; and forthwith forwarded it to Windsor, requesting Lord Conyngham to obtain the King’s signature without delay in order that it might be transmitted by the next post to Ireland. Thus at length he writes :—

“The dice are uncovered, and I hope that the new Chancellor may be met somewhat more cordially than Alexander would have been.”³

The royal apprehension of Plunket being over, Lord Manners was allowed to relinquish the Great Seal of Ireland and Sir Anthony Hart was appointed to succeed him. When George IV., some months later, asked Lamb why a person had been chosen whose name was unknown in public life, he replied, “Because he is a man without either religion or politics, and therefore safe for Ireland.” Without showy talents or a spark of humour, Sir Anthony got on very well. He was a sound lawyer, a painstaking judge, and utterly unswayed by the fits of prejudice and passion to which all concerned in Irish administration were liable.

Upon the whole Lamb received the intelligence of his appointment with a feeling of relief from uncertainty which had become painful :—

“Undoubtedly it would have been more satisfactory to every one connected with this Government to have had Plunket ; yet it is to a certain degree an advantage that it is arranged without occasioning any move at this bar. At present the Lord Lieutenant is so hampered by promises made to Lefroy, when Torrens was promoted to the bench, that there would have been some difficulty in parrying his appointment, which although the individual is, I believe, a good man, would have been in point of political impression one of the worst that could be made. Otherwise, if the appointment of a Solicitor of our own way of thinking could be secured, it would be undoubtedly desirable to promote Joy, who is, as far as the politics of this country are concerned, a most decided and inveterate enemy. I presume you have written to Plunket. You never informed me of the communication

¹ W. Lamb to T. S. Rice, October 22nd, 1827.

² Letter from T. S. Rice, October 23rd, 1827.

³ Letter to T. S. Rice, October 26th, 1827.

you had last with the Master of the Rolls, nor of the manner in which it had been disposed of.”¹

Sir Edward Bellew, an old Catholic baronet of good estate and estimable character, had applied for the commission of the peace, and had been refused by Lord Manners. Like other men of his creed and station, he had taken comparatively little part in politics, contenting himself with giving a yearly subscription to the Catholic rent, allowing his name to be enrolled as a member of the Association, and taking the chair occasionally at an aggregate meeting. These disqualifications, as they had hitherto been considered, ought not in the judgment of Lamb to have any weight with the new Chancellor, and the Home Office left the question absolutely to his discretion.²

“I am not at all acquainted with Sir A. Hart, but from his age and habits I should fear that he would hardly be equal to the taking of a step that I should think most advisable, but which would, it must be felt, be one not deficient in boldness, and which would cast a strong reflection upon the conduct of his predecessor. I will, however, converse with him upon the subject, and see what can be done. With respect to the plan proposed, that a book should be specially kept and accessible in which the names of all magistrates and the persons recommending should be entered, do you not think it objectionable in this point of view, that it seems to imply a right in persons to recommend for the commission of the peace, and to have their recommendation attended to, and also that it will afford an opportunity to those whose recommendations are refused of comparing their claims with those of the persons whose recommendations will appear to have been complied with? This matter of the appointment of the magistrates I have never thought satisfactorily managed in England. There they are recommended by the Lord Lieutenant; they are selected according to the peculiar notions and circumstances of each Lord Lieutenant. In some counties he has election interests to serve, and nominates none but persons in his own interest; in others he is identified with the representation either of the county or borough, is anxious after popularity, and nominates anybody who can be considered in the rank of a gentleman. In the first case the magistracy is perfectly close; in the latter it is too much diffused and too indiscriminate; both of which are great evils.

“In what I wrote of O’Connell I must again repeat, that I spoke from what I had heard of his feelings from others, and had had no opportunity of ascertaining this from himself, so that it is very possible I may have been entirely mistaken, but I rather suspect that my report tallied pretty well with what he himself had expressed to those with whom he communicates. As to the reception of the new Chancellor, depend upon it, it will be very good, and so would that of Alexander have been. The Bar is so divided by the politics of the

¹ From W. Lamb, October 26th, 1827, MS.

² From T. S. Rice, October 26th, 1827, MS.

country that they never can act with any concert, and each party is so rejoiced with the disappointment of the other, that all will accept with the greatest satisfaction a man in whose election neither have any peculiar interest. As to the press, it appears to me to be entirely insignificant and contemptible.

"With respect to the other matter, the letter which has been written has had the most astonishing effect. Pray keep them up to it, and make them write again. I know it is a great bore, but it is necessary. Attention will do much; I believe everything. There is essentially a perfect agreement in views and principles, and a natural leaning towards them. Attention only is wanting, and it is worth while to bestow it." ¹

The Chancellor's frank and fearless impartiality, and his unaffected zeal in the discharge of his duties, won for him the good opinion of nearly all who came into personal contact with him. Lamb "could not sufficiently express" when writing to one of his colleagues in England, "how much he liked him, and what expectations he had that he would do much good." ² And yet the same letter contains incidentally a curious cropping-up of the primary formation of the pettifogger amid all the generous and genial superincumbent strata. The Chancellor represented to Lamb that when Ponsonby was in his situation twenty years before he received his letters from England free, and wished that he should have a like privilege.

Sir A. Hart dealt from the outset with the question of eligibility to hold the commission of the peace with a frankness and fearlessness with which his colleagues were equally surprised and pleased. Lamb felt that it was necessary for the new Chancellor to do nothing, more especially at the commencement, "which should appear like a reflection and censure upon Lord Manners, who, though detested upon the one side, had left a host of powerful and warmly attached friends amongst those whose friendship was worth having. He would not say this to Sir Anthony, because he did not fear that he would be too dashing and imprudent, and it would not be wise to utter any suggestion that might add to the caution of an Equity lawyer." ³ Even Saurin and Joy must see the advantage of having so open-minded and plain-dealing a man, and one so thoroughly master of his business. All the members of the Government were more than satisfied with him, and Lamb's expectation was that he would do much good. ⁴

Hart personified, in point of fact, the principle of negation on which the Cabinet was founded. Neither hot or cold, aggressive or obstructive; progressive at the full pace of public opinion, or subservient to the capulous bidding of a despotic Court, he tried honestly, but unavailingly, to let wrong die out, without daring to call right into

¹ To T. S. Rice, October 28th, 1827, MS.

² Private letter from W. Lamb, November 15th, 1827, MS.

³ Letter, November 3rd, 1827. ⁴ Letter, November 10th, 1822.

existence. He hoped that by slow degrees the ways and habits of rule might be so changed and the permanent official staff so reorganised as to render impossible a resumption of Sidmouth's and Eldon's abortive system of repression. Every move in the Goderich game of chess had to be played without explanation beforehand, even in whispers to the backers who stood nearest wistfully looking on ; and eventually with any number of inconsistent explanations, to turn the edge of conflicting criticisms. Chancellor Hart was sent to Ireland, very much as a *podesta* in the Middle Ages used to be commissioned to administer justice in an Italian State torn by internecine feuds. He understood thoroughly why he had been chosen, and he resolved to act the part without fear, favour or affection. By all parties he was sure to be suspected at the outset ; for colourless impartiality was hitherto unknown ; and its inscrutable features were regarded only as a mask sooner or later to be dropped. Sir Anthony's firmness, probity, and temper lived down these misgivings. In court, diligent, patient, upright, learned, and clear, he made an excellent judge ; in council, ignorant of men and things, and unsympathetic with the views and aspirations of his colleagues in administration, he was unimpressive, unhelpful, useless, and at length almost dumb. With all his industry and integrity, his knowledge of Equity, and his clean-handedness, his nomination was wholly indefensible. If the Bar of Ireland cannot furnish men fit to preside in courts of supreme jurisdiction, these tribunals ought not to exist, but should be made provincially subordinate to the Courts of Westminster. If, on the other hand, men have never been wanting in the ranks of the profession competent to fill these exalted stations, the interests not only of the profession, but of the community, demand that the highest prizes should be given fairly amongst them. But the Chancellorship is a political as well as a judicial office, and his special functions can be adequately performed only by one who, as each local question arises, does not need to be crammed for the occasion with bits and scraps of personal or party information. If the Viceroy or the Secretary be a stranger, he ought to have a Chancellor to consult confidentially* at any and at every moment, who can tell him without prompting who is who, and what is what. Lord Wellesley needed no adviser of the sort, for he had known the country from his birth, and knew all its byways like the walks in his garden. But he was then about to give place to a successor utterly unacquainted with the idiosyncrasies of that troubled land ; and as a political, ecclesiastical or social privy councillor he might as well have consulted one of his aides-de-camp, or his German private secretary, as Lord Chancellor Hart.

Here is a specimen of the troubles of ecclesiastical patronage :—

“By-the-by, I do not know what can be done about Clare ; he has chosen to feel grievously ill-used, and both he and Gort have written the most violent and offensive letters, both to me and the Lord Lieutenant. I did not promise him the living, nor had I power to promise it ; perhaps I did use language which might be a little too

much calculated to encourage him in the expectation that he would have it. But I found the Lord Lieutenant very anxious to give it to Dr. Wallis. I also found Dr. W. already in possession of a cure which is annexed to Kilmurry, and which is in the gift of the Bishop, and which it appeared to me very inexpedient to separate from it. I also found that in point of character there was every reason to give it to Dr. W. ; that the father of the gentleman for whom Clare applied was already in possession of two large benefices within the diocese ; that Lord Limerick and the Chief Baron had both applied as well as Lord Clare ; and under the circumstances I did not feel justified in pressing upon the Lord Lieutenant the application of Lord Clare, to whom, by-the-by, he was as anxious to attend as I was.”¹

It must be owned that at this period he was incredulous regarding the possibility of establishing a neutral system of primary instruction in Ireland. He prognosticated accurately many of the consequences which the attempt was certain to entail ; and too truly foreshadowed the irreconcilability of jealous churches on the subject. But he underrated the desire of the people, of all grades and persuasions, for elementary education ; and overlooked the glaring injustice of leaving the impoverished majority to provide schools for their children out of their own means and substance, while all the old endowments remained in the hands of the wealthier sect :—

“The more I think about education, the more difficult and doubtful I consider the question. Are the Government prepared for the expense of it? Are they prepared to establish a board to manage it according to the recommendation of the Commissioners, and do they consider what influence such a board, with the management of such funds, the nomination of so many masters, the building of so many school-houses, will possess in the country? Is it not certain that the moment the matter is undertaken by the Government, all private education will at once cease, and all the greater part of the schools which at present exist will be put an end to? The price of masters will be raised, as also will the nature of the recommendation necessary ; and, in short, the old *rôle* of educator will be deserted. These are objections which strike me independent of the formidable obstacles which arise out of the difference of the two forms of religion, and the Ninth Report. The latter appears evidently intended for the purpose of escaping from their former concession in the recommendation of the First Report, and of laying the ground of opposition to any general plan that may be proposed. The Roman Catholics also on their part think to intimidate us by stating that if the Government does not do something, they will themselves call upon their flocks for contributions, and establish a fund by the Association for their own people. I myself do not see the danger of this, and should be disposed to desire them to try the experiment. Everything of this sort is better done by private exertion than by public institution.”²

¹ To T. S. Rice, October 28, 1827, MS.

² To T. S. Rice, October 28th, 1827, MS.

A report of the Education Commissioners, four years previously consigned what were called the Charter Schools to extinction. These institutions had been established in several county towns, and elsewhere, for the avowed purpose of proselytism to the ascendant creed. For purposes of education they had proved lamentably deficient in most instances; but the annual grant had been continued notwithstanding. The Chief Secretary wrote on this as on most other topics, to his ever-ready correspondent at the Home Office for information as to what had taken place in the time of his predecessor:—

“I see that the first report was ordered to be printed on the 3rd of June, 1825. Pray, was it almost immediately declared in the House of Commons by Goulburn, that the Charter Schools were to be given up? You can probably give me the history of this transaction, and point out the details which took place upon it. I find myself much puzzled, and a good deal of labour imposed upon me in consequence of my never having paid the least attention to any of the reports or debates upon Irish subjects. I wrote to the Incorporated Society, informing them that the first grant for 1828 could not exceed £12,000; for 1829, £6,000, and that after that year no further grant would be made for that service. This I thought was giving them time enough; but they remonstrated vehemently, and represented that the reduction ought to be more gradual. They also claimed superannuation for their officers.”¹

His correspondence on this subject continues:—

“I have communicated confidentially with the managers of the Belfast Institution, through their secretary, and I now inclose to you a letter which I have received, and which contains the whole of the views of the Board upon the amount and distribution of the proposed Parliamentary Grant. You will observe that the suggestion of the establishment of a professorship of theology for students of the Established Church meets with their unequivocal approbation. At the same time, it is impossible to say how the Church may be inclined to view this proposition, and it has been hinted to me that it may possibly excite some jealousy in Trinity College, as being calculated to diminish the number of their students. Under these circumstances, I think the best course that I can pursue is to converse confidentially with the Primate on the subject, when he comes to Dublin—which of course he will do, for the discharge of his duty as one of the Lords Justices, upon Lord Wellesley’s departure. You will perceive that the Board of Management objects to the manner of making and distributing the grant recommended by the Commissioners (Fourth Report, p. 25). As far as I have considered the subject, I am induced to agree with the Board of Management; but it may be a material consideration how far it may be prudent to omit any check or control the adoption of which the Commissioners have advised. I should be glad to hear your opinion upon this point, as

¹ From W. Lamb, October 30th, 1827, MS.

well as upon all the others, which are touched upon in the inclosed letter, and upon the whole subject generally.”¹

“I am very much afraid about the Divinity Professor at Belfast. In the present temper of Church and State, and religious feeling in this country, it is impossible to say how a proposition of that sort may be viewed. Nobody is acquainted with the intention of making any such proposition at present, but as soon as it made the Primate will of course consult the other Bishops. The Archbishop is too cool and wary a man to be preoccupied. At least, I apprehend so. Somehow or other, I have no predilection for this Belfast business ; I never had. I think you exaggerate its importance, and do not see that it does not stand upon the same principle as other grants which you condemn ; or, at least, how capable it is of being confounded with them, and how difficult to be distinguished from them. These people forget everything else in their own particular object. The Kildare Place Society have sent me in an estimate of £40,000.”²

Popular objections had been raised for some time to the increased grants annually voted by Parliament to the Kildare Place Society, and the Society for Discountenancing Vice, both of which consisted exclusively of members of the Established Church, and had for their avowed object the spread of Protestant education among the humbler classes. Considering the then undiminished sources of the ecclesiastical endowment, and the uninfringed monopoly of office and employment enjoyed by members of the Anglican communion, Lamb could not recommend the continuance of such partial appropriations of the public revenue, and strongly urged ministers to consider and decide the question of their reduction or abolition during the meetings of the Cabinet in November. The questions of policy involved were too important, he thought, to be settled by those who prepared the estimate of Irish Civil Contingencies ; and he therefore hoped Lansdowne would not let ministers separate without coming to some decision.³ About the same time, Sir John Byng was appointed Commander of the Forces in Ireland, superseding Sir Colquhoun Grant, to whose judgment and temper in managing the garrison of Dublin he bore cordial testimony, and whose removal, therefore, he viewed with regret. “This of course cannot be helped, but one is sorry to stir anything that is quiet here.”⁴

“The law about foundlings requires serious consideration. Nothing can be done with the Foundling Hospital but by Act of Parliament, for by the present Act they are bound to receive every child sent according to the provisions of the Act. I do not know what you mean by the ‘Local Foundling Establishments,’ but will inquire respecting them. What do you think of considerably raising the price to be paid upon the admission of a child into the Foundling Hospital?

¹ From Phoenix Park, December 16th, 1827, MS.

² To T. S. Rice, December 25th and 28th, 1827, MS.

³ Marked “secret,” from W. Lamb, November 18th, 1827, MS.

⁴ Idem.

A law doing away with admission altogether would be too strong, would it not ?”¹

Great complaints had from time to time arisen in the execution of the office of sheriff, the underlings of which were not only partial, but corrupt. Lord Lansdowne desired that steps should be taken to reform the whole system ; and the Chief Secretary endeavoured to master the question with a view to legislation :—

“ Upon the sheriff question, it will never do for us to attack the Corporation of Dublin according to the recommendation of the Committee, still less all the other corporations in Ireland. We should have that whole interest in England against us. Goulburn’s bill carries into effect all the recommendations of the Commissioners with respect to the county sheriffs. I doubt if they are of any use. The idea of changing the whole nature of the office and assimilating the practice to that of Scotland may be good, but it is difficult in execution, and will require very serious consideration. It is a total change of the whole law.”²

As an instance of the inveteracy which characterised the spirit of administrative exclusion even in matters the most unpolitical, it may be mentioned that till this time Catholics were silently treated as ineligible to act as governors of county asylums. The members for the city of Limerick addressed a formal application to the Government in favour of the appointment of three respectable persons of that persuasion to be commissioners of the lunatic asylum of the place, no petition or remonstrance having hitherto been of any avail on the subject.³ The gentlemen recommended were forthwith appointed.⁴

O’Connell remained during the autumn at Derrynane, and abstained from any public expression that could embarrass the course of the new Government. In his private correspondence he did not conceal his just expectation that the denial of his rank at the Bar, which Lord Mannors persisted in to the last, would now be remedied, as had been done in England in several instances, by a patent conferring on him pre-audience after the law officers of the Crown. Without any opportunity of ascertaining this from himself, Lamb represented strongly to the Home Office what he had learned of his feelings from others on this subject.⁵ O’Connell felt bitterly his continued exclusion from the place he had fairly won above his fellow-practitioners of the law, and wrote to Spring Rice remonstrating against its continuance under a Government professing principles of sectarian impartiality. He had no objection, he said, to appeal directly to the new Lord Chancellor, and to refer him to the chief judges of assize of the Munster Circuit, who must bear testimony to the fact of his unequalled amount of business, both civil and criminal ; while every half-employed competitor of the privileged creed took rank in court before him. The Under-

¹ To T. S. Rice, December 25th and 28th, 1827, MS. ² Ibid.

³ From T. S. Rice, November, 1827, MS.

⁴ From W. Lamb, December 2nd, 1827, MS.

⁵ W. Lamb to T. S. Rice, October 28th, 1827, MS.

Secretary inclosed his reply, which had been approved by Lord Lansdowne, to Lamb, and suggested a conference with Sir A. Hart, from whom he anticipated no objection. He wisely recommended that if a patent of precedence were conceded it had better come with the grace of a voluntary gift than as if yielded to complaint or negotiation : and wishing that his friend should have the credit of the concession, he begged that no allusion should be made to his advice in conversation with the Chancellor.¹ Lord Lansdowne authorized an intimation to be conveyed to the Irish Chancellor that "there would be no indisposition, but the contrary, to make a communication from the Home Office on the subject of O'Connell's claim to precedence should he consider such a step expedient. But it would be on every possible ground better that the matter should be strictly considered as it affected the profession, the business of the courts, and the interests of suitors and the public." The Under-Secretary sent Sir A. Hart a private letter from himself to O'Connell, endeavouring to dissuade him from making the request, as likely to embarrass the party ; but he admitted frankly that they had no claim upon him to follow their advice, and that he wished the Chancellor to consider and decide the matter on strictly professional grounds.² The Home Secretary approved of the dissuasive letter, but would not sway the Chancellor's decision ;³ and Lamb was left free to form and give his own opinion on the subject. O'Connell replied with some bitterness, reproaching the Whigs with their indifference to individual claims for justice, all the harder to bear when, for the convenience of Government, the general demands of their communion had been put in partial abeyance—"The previous administration had at least the virtue of sincerity ; the grace of hypocrisy was now employed to mitigate the exclusive system." Spring Rice rejoined that this was neither candid nor kind. When O'Connell had first proposed to apply for a patent of precedence with reference to the judges, regarding his forensic position, he had been supposed to contemplate a public and official proceeding ; and this had been deprecated in confidence as one in every way unwise. But when he explained that he meant to follow only precedents at the English Bar, and to conduct the correspondence on a private footing, the objection disappeared. In spite of what he had said to him in private, he had really urged upon his colleagues the justice of his professional remonstrance against denial of his rank at the Bar. Not fifty such letters should "deter him from labouring still to serve him, as an act of justice, and as a debt due to his profession and his country. Whatever his correspondent's feelings might be, he would endeavour to do what was right, to serve him in spite of himself." ⁴ O'Connell was touched and gratified by a circumstantial proof placed before him

¹ T. S. Rice, December, 1827, MS.

² To Sir A. Hart, December 6th, 1827.

³ To W. Lamb from T. S. Rice, December 8th, 1827.

⁴ To O'Connell, December 14th, 1827.

at the same time of a sincere desire to serve him in another matter. He acknowledged his mistake, and the correspondence closed with mutual expressions of good-will. But the opportunity was lost, and nothing was done.

The new Chancellor did not think much of Saurin :—

“After hearing his first argument, he asked a friend to whom he was accustomed to speak without reserve, ‘Is this the gentleman who has made such a sensation in this country?’ ‘Yes,’ was the reply; ‘I am rather surprised at it,’ the rejoinder. The great means by which the Orange gentry have drawn over every one who has come here was by assuming that their set were the only persons worth associating with, quite the first company; and you who know Almack’s, know that this is supposed to be one of the strongest, if not the very strongest, passion of the human mind. Now to this Hart is completely inaccessible, he does not care one damn for one society more than another; on the contrary, he rather prefers the lower. I do not believe Leach, with all the polish of London fashion upon him, would have been above this feeling here, and from what I hear of Alexander, I think he would have been much more likely to have been overcome by it.

“With respect to the Drogheda business, the very course which you have recommended to A. Dawson, is that which I had settled with Wallace should be pursued. The Bishop of Limerick, and the persons whom you propose for the Directors of the Limerick Lunatic Asylum, are very proper, and I have ordered them to be appointed forthwith; but we have added that the Bishop of Killaloe should also be appointed, and that he should be requested to name such gentlemen as are fit for the office in the county of Clare, which is a contributory county and does not send any directors at present. I could not of course refuse to make the offer to the Bishop, and also to mention to him the suggestion of the Bishop of Limerick, but I shall wait a reply from you before I do anything further in it.¹

Of the difficulties of a position commanding official patronage he was deeply sensible. He had never been in office in England, and therefore did not know that it might not be the same there. But in Ireland he could not give away a place of fifty pounds a year without making fifty enemies.²

Players at chess who carry on their game by correspondence are liable to make odd mistakes through inadvertence, which could not otherwise occur. A comical blunder appears in letters between the friends, who understood each other in general so well. The Under-Secretary inclosed an epistle addressed to him regarding the state of the country by a distinguished individual, whose initials he supposed the Secretary for Ireland would recognise at a glance. Lamb only made out that the surname was Doyle, and with a judgmatical comment on the style, which he thought very good, returned the letter of

¹ Letter to T. S. Rice, December 11th, 1827, MS.

² From W. Lamb, December 2nd, 1827, MS.

Sir Charles.¹ Great was his amusement at discovering by return of post that he had exchanged heedlessly a bishop for a knight.

"I must say that you do not acquire experience rapidly: only imagine your blunder; you mistake Dromio of Syracuse for Dromio of Ephesus, a general for a bishop; the awful I.K.L. for an innocent K.C.B. I sent you Bishop Doyle's letter more as a curiosity than anything else; for as to his reasoning, I do not by any means admit its applicability as a general expression for solving our Irish problem. In Ireland we are all given to admit the mischief, but to shift the burthen of responsibility, we fling ours north to Greenland, Nova Zembla, or the Lord knows where. Thus the Protestant denounces the Papist, the Papist the Proctor; the Proctor the Policeman, the Policeman the Country Justice; the resident the absentee, the latter the Pope, the Devil, and I regret to add the Irish Secretary. The latter takes his revenge on all classes in turn, and so the vicious circle ends as it began. Whether Peachum and Lockit 'we are all in the wrong,' or the old song, 'They were all of them rogues in their turn,' describes the case most accurately, I stop not to ask."²

"I agree, however, with much of Doyle's letter, and I do believe the people are monstrously aggrieved by rent and tithe. He mentions —. Now if one-half of what is told me of him be true, and it comes from many different quarters, if he had had forty thousand lives, there could have been no wonder if they had all been taken. I have no doubt it is Lady Clare who has influenced Clare. No man could be so wrong-headed; at the same time, I observe that those who have been in England are more craving and unreasonable than those who have lived here all their lives, particularly those who have formed anything of an English connection. It exalts and influences their ideas of their own consequence (always a feeble point) to an astonishing degree. I wrote to Lansdowne about the yeomanry here not long ago; the sooner they are all got rid of the better; at the same time you are aware that the measure is one of a too delicate nature, and which will produce considerable sensation. I believe that if the Militia staff were sent after the yeomanry, it would be so much the better, not any country gentleman in Ireland would be against this. To-morrow the Archbishop of Dublin takes the chair at the Rotunda for the new reformation, and news is just brought that O'Connell and Shiel have both taken tickets, so fun is expected."³

The most valuable piece of patronage in the staff of each of the Common Law Courts was the office of Prothonotary, in which, a vacancy occurring, Plunket asked the appointment for his second son. A day or two after, tidings were received that difficulties in the Cabinet were likely to lead to its overthrow. Lamb wrote merely a few lines saying he was unable to collect distinctly what had happened. To

¹ Private letter, December 6th, 1827.

² From T. S. Rice, December 10th, 1827, MS.

³ To T. S. Rice, December 13th, 1827, MS.

him it was entirely unintelligible ; all he hoped was that his correspondent would give all possible speed to the appointment of David Plunket.

"A fellow said to him the other day, speaking of the termination of Lord Plunket's career, 'For a failure, for a complete failure, it must be admitted that it was not so bad.' There was justice in this observation."¹

He learned that his advice was acted upon without hesitation or delay. "A pretty good hedge for a losing player. £1500 salary, and patronage to a greater extent, is a tolerable appanage for a younger son. You are strong," adds his correspondent, "to be able to part with so much."²

"In the first place, Plunket begs that I will desire you to express to Lord Lansdowne how very much he feels the manner in which he has received the appointment of his son. And secondly, I have sent you by to-night's post some papers upon the subject of the Linen Board, which I beg you will forward to Lord Lansdowne as soon as you receive them, and request his attention to them. As to Æneas M'Donnell it would be highly unadvisable to interfere. The latter wants to get off his sentence, and therefore represents to Blunt that great dangers are impending, etc., etc., all of which, I have no doubt, he would represent as sure to be averted by his being pardoned. The whole plan on the part of the Roman Catholics is to act by menace and intimidation. I quite agree with you that what has taken place in politics is awkward and untoward, but it does not surprise me in the least. I will write again to-morrow, but am tired now."³

As had frequently happened before, the discontinuance of political agitation was followed by the revival of wild schemes and plots among the peasantry in the more restless localities. Ministers grew uneasy at frequent reports of agrarian disturbance, indicating the renewed activity of secret societies banded together for local rather than general objects. As early as the 20th of October a letter from Lamb reached Bowood conveying information so "unsatisfactory that, although marked private and confidential, it was by the Home Secretary's direction forwarded in circulation to the other members of the Cabinet. The Under-Secretary was desired not to let the letter out of his own hands."⁴ As time went on, matters continued to grow worse :—

"As to the state of Tipperary, you see what it is. Donoughmore, Llandaff, Glengall, Prittie, all agree that it is worse than it ever was, and that the system of combination and terror is more completely established and organised than ever before. What this arises from you know better than I ; at least, I hope you do. It has got to its

¹ From W. Lamb, December 21st, 1827, MS.

² To W. Lamb from T. S. Rice, December 24th, 1827, MS.

³ To T. S. Rice, December 24th, 1827, MS.

⁴ From Lansdowne, October 21st, 1827, MS.

present head from the inactivity and relaxation of the police in that province, which is mainly owing to the supineness, etc., arising in a great degree from ill-health, of the inspector, General Wilcocks, whom we are going to change immediately. We are also about to get rid of Wilson, but the roots of the evil of course lie far deeper, and if we could ascertain them, there would still remain the task of eradicating them. With respect to D'Arcy's report, I am not aware that you alluded to it in your official letter. I remember it appeared to me upon the whole favourable, but I will look over it again to-morrow. I will send an experimental despatch to Lansdowne to-morrow. I knew it was no use to write to him until he came to London. I have now written some letters of considerable consequence upon questions which must be decided upon by the administration. Lord Wellesley talks of leaving before Christmas. I have written to Lord Anglesey to know when he means to arrive." ¹

Lansdowne thought it to be his duty, even at the risk of disturbing the equanimity of the Viceroy, whose term of office now drew near its close, to call serious attention to the flagrancy of insubordination in parts of Munster, and to inquire what measures, repressive or remedial, the Irish Executive were prepared to recommend. Lord Wellesley waxed more and more impatient to be relieved of his office. His successor had been some time announced, and men's eyes were turning to the new Viceroy, whose influence was already discernible in the horizon. The position of superseded satrap did not suit the conqueror of Tippoo Saib. Early in December, he wrote to the Home Office naming for Lords Justices the Protestant and the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin, and the Lord Chancellor, and requesting that the necessary documents should be forwarded forthwith to enable him to quit the scene where he lagged superfluous. Lord Lansdowne wrote him a soothing letter of gratitude on behalf of the King, and of appreciation by the Cabinet of his distinguished viceregal career. Spring Rice asked Lamb why the two Chief Justices, Plunket and Bushe, had been left out of the commission. No wonder he replied :

"It is quite impossible that Plunket and Bushe could have been in the commission as Lords Justices ; you must mean the commissioners for holding the Great Seal. Three Lords Justices are too many, five would be the Devil." ²

From Huskisson's private communications, though neither numerous nor unreserved, he had gathered truly how little confidence was felt by his colleagues in the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. Without his advice Tierney had been authorized to ask Lord Spencer if the Chairmanship of the promised Finance Committee would be accepted by his son. Althorp was disposed to comply, but told his father he did not believe the King would consent to his nomination ; ³ and so it

¹ Private letter from W. Lamb, December 11th, 1827, MS.

² From W. Lamb, December 15th, 1827, MS.

³ Lord Althorp to his father, November 24th, 1827.

proved. Herries declared that in a matter affecting his department he ought to have been consulted, and that if the arrangement were insisted on he would resign. Huskisson, on the other hand, refused to yield upon a point which touched so nearly his authority as leader in the Commons ; and the Premier and Home Secretary supported him.

Before Christmas private letters gave mysterious hints that a break-up in the Government was at hand. Paragraphs appeared more or less obscurely indicating that the First Lord of the Treasury was about to retire. On the 16th, the bow-window at White's already declared the resignation of the Premier to be accepted, and named Lord Harrowby as his successor.¹ This was premature, but not wholly unfounded. A King's messenger had been, in fact, sent to the ex-Lord President, but had brought back no answer of which the public were destined to be informed.

Lord Goderich had begun to realize thoroughly the perplexities and pains of a situation for which, better than any one else, he knew himself to be unfit. By an unaccountable caprice of fortune he had been allowed to sit undisturbed in the dressing-gown and slippers of power during the recess ; and if the wherewithal to fabricate a policy of any distinctive kind had been in him, there was time and opportunity enough for the purpose. But as another session drew nigh he was constrained to own that except secondary measures of administrative reform he had none to present to Parliament. In foreign affairs, Lord Dudley, with all his naïveté and talent, was unable to get beyond the point of saying clever things about events that had happened ; but he was wholly incapable of pre-determining what ought to happen, or how that which ought not might be averted. The Premier felt more and more his inability to lead the Cabinet, to satisfy the King, or to face Parliament. He would be examined and cross-examined about Navarino and Catholic Emancipation ; and he was utterly unable to make up his mind as to what was to be said or what was to be done. The Duke of Clarence was becoming hourly more unmanageable by his bearers at the Admiralty ; and after the fate of the Turkish fleet, nobody could feel sure what ally's squadron we might not next send to the bottom. Canning had risked the consequences of his Royal Highness's appointment as Lord High Admiral, relying on his own personal ascendancy to prevent mischief, or to supersede the impulsive Duke, should necessity arise. But his timid successor would have died of palpitation of the heart before he accomplished such a feat ; and when, in addition to all other perplexities, he learned that many leading Tories, including Lords Eldon and Bathurst, had offered to concert plans of opposition with Earl Grey sooner than allow him to enjoy his position of chief minister in peace, he began to persuade himself that his health was giving way, and to prepare his Majesty for the contingency of a possible change.² George IV. readily divined

¹ From T. S. Rice, December 16th, 1827, MS.

² Confidential letter from T. S. Rice, December 19th, 1827, MS.

the truth, and carefully dissembled his satisfaction. Lord Goderich returned from Windsor on the 18th, delighted with the more than cordial assurances of unabated confidence on the part of royalty, and for a few days more, emphatic contradictions were given personally and in the press to the rumours of his resignation. Even Spring Rice seems to have been lulled into security. He told Lamb there was little doubt of their going on as before. There was no denying that the report and the cause which produced it increased the difficulties very considerably. But those difficulties must be met and overcome. To succeed there must indeed be spirit and manliness equal to integrity and good intention. "The knights must come into the lists with a flourish of trumpets and kettle-drums, and not with lutes and harps. Lord Goderich would continue in for the present. All this it must be admitted was devilish unlucky, as it would give the notion of timidity and irresolution; and the world, which is always cowardly and easily bullied, pardons a crime more easily than a weakness. The mass of mankind hate the feeble. The King has expressed himself with the utmost determination, and there does not seem to have been one thought of the Tories."¹ Lamb, however, knew better than his correspondent with whom they had to deal; and from this time he ceased to feel any reliance on the stability of the Government.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WELLINGTON ADMINISTRATION.

Illness and death of Lady Caroline—Resignation of Goderich—Commander-in-Chief sent for—Eldon left out—Huskisson and his friends remain—Eastern Question.

THE Lords Justices took little part in the business of Government, and its responsibilities for the time being devolved chiefly upon Lamb. His correspondence with Whitehall continued daily to embrace exceptional topics of local or individual interest and the large questions awaiting legislative attention:—

"You have never returned me Baron Pennefather's report upon the case of Mary Doran. The circumstances are most distressing; but what can be done in the case of a barbarous murder? It appeared to me that the case of the Chelsea Pensioners, though not within the letter, was within the spirit and principle of the order respecting the payment of the troops, and that it was safer to have the payments made in

¹ A confidential letter from T. S. Rice, December 19th, 1827.

notes of the Bank of Ireland. You will perceive that the Roman Catholics have fixed on the 15th instant for their simultaneous meetings after Mass. Nothing can be more unfair or ungenerous than that they should assume a sterner tone towards us than they did towards the former Government. However, I am clearly of opinion that they should not be interfered with in any way. If any breach of the public peace takes place it is upon their own heads. Considering the various causes of disturbances which are abroad, I am only surprised that the tranquillity of the country is maintained, and of course I should not be the least so at its being disturbed at any moment. Pray return me Baron Pennefather's report. I am harassed to death with domestic calamity, but I feel that it would be awkward that I should leave this place at this moment."¹

The later period of Lamb's sojourn in Ireland was overcast by the gloom of family affliction ; from which he sought relief in the varied details of official work. In the beginning of November the health of Lady Caroline invisibly declined. Lady Morgan notes in her diary, 27th November, that though the Chief Secretary came to dine with her to meet Lord Cloncurry, William Curran, Evans of Portran, and A. R. Blake, he was in the lowest spirits from the bad accounts of poor Lady Caroline ; her life they feared was fast ebbing but she had tried friends around her. A fortnight later he inclosed a note from Dr. Goddard, the physician in attendance, saying that medicine knew no effectual cure ; and that the expedients resorted to for temporary relief were necessarily trying in their painful nature even to temperaments more happily constituted. She showed, however, little of impatience in her suffering, and there was hardly a word of petulance or complaint. From the first she evidently felt the seriousness of her condition, and gradually accustomed herself to contemplate the event which at no distant time she knew to be approaching. Her letters to her husband might have been written by one who had never known a troubled hour. They were full of affection, fortitude, and tenderness ; not a word of recurrence to sad memories, or of repining at her actual lot. It seemed as if the unquiet spirit which so long had lamentably possessed her was at length cast out ; and that she reverted calmly to the days of early love and admiration for the man to whom in girlhood she had given her heart and hand. They were frequently inclosed by him to Lady Morgan, towards whom to the end she evinced strong feelings of attachment ; and there are many brief but touching proofs of the solicitude he felt on her account as time wore on and no indication of amendment appeared :—

“PHENIX PARK, *December 3rd*, 1827.

“DEAR LADY MORGAN,—I send you the letters which I received by yesterday's mail. They are very melancholy. The firmness and distinctness with which her letter is written shows how strong she is

¹ To T. S. Rice, January 4th, 1828, MS.

both in mind and body. Send these to the Castle when you have done with them. I have got a bad cold and sore throat, which prevents my going into town to-day.

"Yours faithfully,
"WM. LAMB."

The following is the letter inclosed :—

"DEAREST WILLIAM,—This is the first time I can write. I have suffered much, and I hope patiently, since I wrote last. Tapping is by no means an agreeable sensation. It does not give pain like a tooth drawn, but it turns you deadly cold and sick. The operation was more troublesome than usual ; this is the first day I feel easy. All the county have been to see me. My dear brother has read to me and soothed me, and is coming back. I never met with such affection and kindness as from all persons of both our families, and dear Emily and Caroline ; but what pleased me most was your dear letter saying you loved and forgave me. God bless you, dearest. My love to Augustus. All here doing well.

"Ever yours,
"CAROLINE."

"DUBLIN CASTLE, *January 11th*, 1828.

"DEAR LADY MORGAN,—I inclose you the letter which I have received this morning. The natural strength of her constitution shows itself, but I am afraid fruitlessly. I am sorry that I cannot accept your invitation for the 14th inst.

"Yours faithfully,
"WM. LAMB."

After the departure of Lord Wellesley and before the arrival of his successor, a new movement in the strategy of agitation, originating with Mr. Shiel, had marked the opening of the new year. Simultaneous meetings throughout the whole country were summoned for the second week in January. Two thousand assemblages around the altars of a people. More than six millions in number uttered as if with one voice the passionate prayer for equal justice ; and the response which loudly came from every organ of liberal opinion in Great Britain was followed by tokens of sympathy not to be mistaken, from France and other continental states. The lull in threatening excitement caused by Canning's accession to power, and prolonged till the close of the year, ended with the Goderich Administration. The meetings of the Central Association in Dublin were resumed, and larger contributions than ever from the United States augmented its revenues. Whatever ministerial changes might take place, it became more and more plainly inevitable that the removal of religious disabilities must at least be recognised as an open question among the advisers of the Crown. Until a settlement could be come to, and while the irritation and mischief caused by its postponement were

prolonged it seemed to the Chief Secretary peculiarly necessary to show diligence in preparing and carrying remedial measures of subordinate but substantial importance :—

“Only let not too many be attempted at the same time. Let me implore you not to attempt too many things at once. There is the Jury Bill, an alteration of considerable importance, and which deserves to be well weighed. Let one measure be adopted and settle down a little before you bring on another. If you dash at the whole at once, you run the risk of producing confusion and discrediting your own reformatations. Pray let me know what is going on. I have written fully to the Lord Lieutenant upon the simultaneous meetings of the Roman Catholics, and have desired him to communicate with the ministers upon them.”¹

Some of his dispatches refer to personal jealousies about the shrievalty in counties, and to general recommendations for reforming the manner of filling the office in corporate towns. Others are occupied with discussions relative to plans of primary education, for the consideration of which the Home Secretary proposed that he should move for a select committee. But what, he asked, were they to do when they got into the committee? Were they prepared for the plan of the Commissioners, to establish non-sectarian schools in which lessons in the Bible should be taught without exposition or comment?

“There appear to me to be innumerable difficulties in the way of carrying it into effect, in constituting the Board, in the question of the Scriptures, etc. But if it is thought wise to have a committee upon it, I have no objection, but it must be done upon mature consultation, and with some determinate object.”

Lord Goderich, in the audience on the 18th of December, had recommended the addition of Lords Wellesley and Holland to the Cabinet. This would not have changed the proportion of parties as originally settled, while it would have given great additional strength to the Government in debating power, and political weight in the eyes of the country. The King gave no reply. A few days later the same proposal was submitted by the Premier in a letter which was seen by Mr. Huskisson and Lord Lansdowne, but to which a post-script, which they did not see, was added to the effect that domestic circumstances affecting the health of one most dear to the writer rendered him sometimes incapable of continuing to perform the duties of his station. Lyndhurst, who had adroitly offered to be the bearer of the letter, was asked by his Majesty who should be sent for; and, as had doubtless been pre-arranged, he named the Duke of Wellington. He shared the dislike of Peel which he knew was felt by the King, and he could not be unconscious of the distrust and reserve with which he himself was regarded in return. Under the great soldier, his position would be very different from that which he could hope to occupy under the strait-laced and exacting formalist, whose

¹ To T. S. Rice, January 7th, 1828, MS.

value as Home Secretary and leader of the Commons was indisputable, but whose "fitness to be at the top" he never would admit. "Remember," he said to a colleague long afterwards, when Peel had gained and lost that high position, "I never thought him a great man." Differ as they might, they had one thing in common, weariness of the obstinacy and imbecility of Lord Eldon. George IV. liked what he had seen of the new Chancellor, and he was accordingly retained. It was perhaps the only instance in which within twelve months the Great Seal had been confided to the same hands by three different Premiers. Huskisson consented to remain Secretary for the Colonies and leader of the House of Commons; Palmerston, Dudley, and Grant retained their respective positions, while the places vacated were filled by Bathurst, Peel, Goulburn, Aberdeen, Ellenborough and Melville; Herries being transferred to the Duchy of Lancaster. It is said that Lord Wellesley had reason to believe that he would be named as the most fitting Premier by his brother, and that the Duke's acceptance of the post himself caused an estrangement that was never subsequently healed.¹

Lord Eldon, though seventy-seven, felt aggrieved at being passed over. The Duke paid him the compliment of a friendly visit, to talk over matters, the day after his own appointment, but the ex-Chancellor saw no more of him until the administration was complete; he then paid a second visit—one, it would seem, of explanation. He had found it impracticable to put together such a cabinet as Lord Eldon would like to join. The component elements were freely discussed—the firmness of some, the flexibility of others, and the infirmity of the whole. The field-marshal was too proud to ask the ancient judge in so many words whether it would do, but he evidently had a curiosity to know what his old friend thought of it; and he told him: "I said I thought it a damned bad one." Before they parted the confidence of the soldier seemed shaken, and the grief of the lawyer for his own fate and that of the British constitution broke forth in tears.

For a period of six months the Duke had been Commander-in-Chief, a proud and independent position which by universal assent he might have continued to hold for life, but which the ambition of being a political leader induced him to exchange for the uncertainty, anxiety, and, as it proved, unpopularity of the Premiership. That he lived to look back upon this part of his life without pride or satisfaction, is indicated in a memorandum which he wrote ten years later on military administration:—

"In the winter of 1827-8, Lord Goderich having reported to George IV. that the Government was defunct, I being at that time Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the King sent for me; and, I conclude for my sins, I was told I was to form a Government for his Majesty. I acceded, and very shortly after the Government was formed it was intimated to me by my colleagues that I ought to resign my office as

¹ H. Bulwer, 'Life of Palmerston,' 213.

Commander-in-Chief of the Army. I resigned accordingly, and Lord Hill was recommended to the King to be my successor. I, at the same time, declared my determination never to interfere from that time in any military affair or arrangement, and particularly not in one of a personal nature, such as the promotion, rewards, appointment to offices, grant of commissions to officers or recommendations to the sovereign of gentlemen for commissions, unless I should be called upon for my advice or assistance by the general commanding the army in chief, by the sovereign, or his ministers.”¹

The most singular feature in the statement perhaps is the incidental admission that, when sent for by the King, it did not at first occur to the great soldier that if he assumed the powers and functions of chief minister he must renounce those of Commander-in-Chief. Their union in the same person probably never occurred as a possibility to the mind of George IV., who was especially jealous of the extent and degree of authority conceded to any one. But it would be incredible, if we had it not thus frankly confessed under the Duke's own hand, that he waited to be told by his colleagues (probably by Lyndhurst and Huskisson) that the functions of the two great offices of state could not be concentrated in the same individual; whereupon, as he declares with characteristic simplicity, he not only laid down his military power, but thenceforth scrupulously abstained, whether in or out of office, from attempting to exercise any personal influence with his successor.

The Duke wrote to Ireland without delay, expressing his hope that Lamb would retain the situation he had hitherto filled with so much credit to himself and satisfaction to the King. Consistently with the course he had formerly pursued, he resolved to act in concert with others whom he politically trusted, regarding the reacceptance of office, and until he knew their determination he would give no definite reply. His answer to the new Premier's letter courteously intimated this resolve:—

“I have just received your letter of the 12th inst., and feel sensibly the friendly terms in which it is expressed. Both on account of your public character and the uniform kindness which I have ever experienced at your hands, there is no man either with whom or under whom personally I should be more happy to serve than yourself; but the reply to your proposal depends upon so many considerations, that I trust you will think it prudent that I should delay making it until I have the opportunity of conversing with you upon the whole of the intended arrangements and upon the proposed course of measures. For this purpose I shall leave this country as early as I possibly can, and hope to arrive in London by the end of the week at latest.”

His departure was unavoidably delayed for some days, and at

¹ MS. memorandum on Military Patronage, in the collection of original papers at Apsley House, dated March 13th, 1839.

length, on the 23rd of January, he left Ireland after six months' residence, to return no more.

On reaching Melbourne House, he was shocked at the change which had taken place in Lady Caroline during his absence. She had been removed to town for the benefit of medical advice soon after Christmas ; and whatever skill and care could do was done to soothe her sufferings and preserve the attenuated thread of life. Conscious of her approaching end, her chief anxiety seemed to be that her husband should be with her at the last. Long used to her exaggerated tone of despondency, he had not fully realised the imminence of her danger until within a few days of quitting Dublin ; but no syllable of reproach for his seeming delay in coming escaped her dying lips. The fever of that troubled soul had ceased, her warfare with the world was over, and her feeble accents were of the old love only, the first great triumph of her life, and her last. She lingered only a few days longer, for the most part in a state bordering on unconsciousness. Her brother William, who throughout her illness had been unremitting in his care, warmly expressed his sense of the solace which her husband's frequent letters had afforded her, and the tenderness of his demeanour when he came. "William Lamb behaved throughout as I always knew he would."

In the still fresh grave, all conjugal fret and feud was buried ; and memories of the earlier days of mutual attachment and admiration seemed to fill his mind. He did not care to look back into the long account between them of faults and shortcomings. It was closed for ever in this world ; and even among his adversaries none was found ruthless enough to endeavour to reopen it.

A bequest to her old friend Lady Morgan was the miniature of Byron painted in 1813 by Saunders. It was accompanied by a letter from Lamb, February 1828, expressive only of generous and manly sorrow. The portrait was kept by Lady Morgan in a small ebony cabinet until her death. It was finished with exquisite care, and considered by many of the poet's contemporaries a more faithful likeness than those with which the world is generally familiar. Less masculine and more refined, it resembles rather in expression the statue by Thorwaldsen in the Library at Cambridge. With other pictures it was sold at Christie's, and is now in the possession of a gentleman residing near Carshalton.

In spite of all her waywardness and folly, Lamb was beyond all doubt passionately fond of his wife. She retained to the last a strong influence over him, and years after her death he used to speak of her with tears, and ask moodily, " Shall we meet in another world ?"

On communicating with his late colleagues, he found that Lansdowne, Carlisle, Spring Rice, and Mackintosh had not been invited to remain ; but that Dudley, Palmerston, Grant and Tierney had been asked to do so ; Huskisson continuing to be leader of the Commons. Should he stay or go ? Intimacies and friendships pleaded opposite ways ; for a day or two he hesitated ; but finally

determined to hold on. Was he wrong? Judging by the event, it may be said, as it was said at the time, "Undoubtedly." But it is worthy of observation that by none of those who for the next three months sat on the opposite benches was his course regarded otherwise than as a venturesome attempt on his part to reinfuse the tolerant and modifying element of Canningism into Government. It was an unsuccessful coalition ; and if any one could have foreshown Huskisson and his friends where and why it would fail, none of them would have joined the Duke. But such wisdom aforethought was not possessed by any one concerned at the time. George IV. expressed personally his satisfaction that Lamb retained his office ; but he had given, and was soon to give again, proof that his mind was not to be swayed in such matters by the personal liking or flattery of the King. He liked his office, irksome and onerous though he often felt its cares to be. But it gave him for the first time fit occupation. After waiting during half a lifetime for the opportunity to prove his capability of usefulness as an administrator, he might well be pardoned a feeling of reluctance to cast the opportunity away. He was conscious that in opposition he could never hope to assert his place among statesmen. Enthusiasm for abstract principles was not in his heart, or the demagogue's greed of applause in his head. His capacity was that of a minister, not of a rhetorician ; and when he was told that as Secretary for Ireland he could still speak and vote for Catholic Emancipation, and a lessening of prohibitory duties on foreign corn, he resolved to remain with Huskisson, Dudley, Palmerston, and Grant in the new administration. How long he would have been able with satisfaction to himself to have retained his post without a seat in the Cabinet, and subject to the control of a Home Secretary like Peel, conjecture must be vain. He was not called upon by Lord Anglesey to alter or forego in any respect the administrative policy pursued under Lord Wellesley ; the popularity he had acquired did not seem to abate ; and when Mr. Hyde Villiers visited Ireland somewhat later he learned that as Chief Secretary he was generally liked beyond all precedent. But he soon found the difference in his position caused by the retirement of Lord Lansdowne and Spring Rice, with whom he had hitherto worked in uninterrupted confidence and cordiality.

Lord William Bentinck in terms sufficiently flattering asked the late Under-Secretary to accompany him in a confidential capacity to India : and the prospect of office at home having come to an end, Rice felt disposed for some days to entertain the proposal as one which opened fairly to him a new career of usefulness and ambition. The term of the East Indies Charter was approaching its end ; a growing disposition already manifested itself in the public mind to impose new conditions, on its renewal, favourable to free principles of trade, of discussion and of local rule ; the new Viceroy was a man with whom, personally and politically, it would have been agreeable to act ; and the pecuniary inducements were not inconsiderable. But subsequently to his first expression of conditional acceptance "a bar

had been put to the project by the feeling of one whom it was his primary duty to consult.”¹

Great irritation was expressed by Canning’s immediate friends at Huskisson’s retaining office under the Duke. A few days after his return to England he assured Mrs. Canning that “no power on earth should ever induce him to unite in office with those whom he considered as the destroyers of his friend.” When assailed in Parliament his explanation was received coldly. His vindication of himself and his friends rested on their number and the importance of the offices they retained, six of the Cabinet out of thirteen having been appointed by Mr. Canning. He was thus entitled to say that they had obtained guarantees that the principles would be respected which they had always upheld. The Duke, when taunted with having made terms of compromise, repudiated as derogatory to himself and Huskisson the idea of any compact or bargain; but frankly recognised the confidence which might be reasonably felt in the policy of a Government that comprised so many friends of the deceased Premier.² Lamb, though not in the Cabinet, was especially concerned on account of the situation that he filled. To suppose that he entertained no doubts or misgivings when severing himself for the time from the Whig friends with whom till yesterday he had been confidentially acting, and who thenceforth resumed their old attitude in opposition, would be to misread the whole character of the man. He had never expected to find himself so placed; and not all his liking for Huskisson, Dudley, and Palmerston could reconcile him to antagonism in public with Lansdowne, Holland, and Spring Rice. In private their friendship was never marred, and if he lived less with them during the few months that followed, it was in some measure owing to the bereavement which necessarily withdrew him from general society. But as they had not quarrelled with Lord Grey in the previous year, though vexed by his pitiless attack on Canning, so there was not a trace of ungenerous comment on the course now taken by Lamb. He was able to point with satisfaction to the omission in the King’s Speech of any threatening allusion to the Catholic Association. The knowledge he had recently acquired of the actual condition of things in Ireland taught him to regard that body, not indeed as innocuous, but rather as constituting a specific danger so formidable that no sacrifice could be too great to effect the removal of the intolerable grievance that was its cause. He had not been many days at the Irish Office when the question was raised in Parliament by one of his late colleagues regarding the policy to be pursued towards Ireland;—was it to be one of repression or reconciliation? On the 13th of February he wrote a confidential note to the new Premier:—

“Spring Rice gave notice yesterday in the House that he would on

¹ Lady Theodosia, daughter of Lord Limerick, whom he had married. Letter to Lord William Bentinck, January 3rd, 1828.

² Debate in the Lords, February 1828.

Friday next ask whether it was the intention of ministers to continue the 6th of George IV. c. 4, being the act against the Roman Catholic Association. It would of course be better to be able to give him a decisive answer, as the matter being kept in suspense occasions agitation."¹

The Cabinet on being consulted agreed that no new measure of coercion should be brought forward, and he was directed to reply to the question accordingly.

On the expiration of Lord Wellesley's term of office, the Goderich Cabinet had agreed to recommend the Marquis of Anglesey to be his successor. Personally a favourite with the King, an idol with the Army, and known to be far-going in liberality on sectarian questions,² his appointment was deemed a politic stroke, which the Duke of Wellington saw no reason to disapprove. On the 27th of February he was gazetted Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and his public entry into Dublin was marked with demonstrations of popular good will.

The most notable paragraph in the Speech on the opening of the session of 1828 "lamented that the conflict at Navarino should have occurred with the naval force of an ancient ally; and hoped that this untoward event would not be followed by further hostilities, and would not impede the amicable adjustment of existing differences between the Porte and the Greeks." Angry criticism was directed against the language thus applied to a transaction which, though certainly not contemplated beforehand by the Goderich Cabinet, had never been censured by them, and which it was strenuously contended was the legitimate consequence of the tripartite treaty of July acknowledging Hellenic independence. Lamb, though he had nothing departmentally to do with the matter, never shrank from defending the foreign policy of his colleagues as substantially just and wise. Huskisson and Dudley could not be mistaken as to the real views entertained by Canning of Russian designs south of the Danube. And from these they knew that there was no substantial difference in the sentiments of the Duke. The Porte was, if possible, to be withheld from attempting the reconquest of the Morea, whose allegiance she had forfeited, and whose possession she had lost; but because her councils were obstinate and rash it was not our interest that her territory should be appropriated by a neighbour already too powerful and aggressive. To the French Ambassador the language of the new Premier was clear and emphatic.

"We are all interested in the continued existence in a state of independence of the power of the Porte in Europe. We are not prepared for its destruction. We ought to direct our efforts steadily to attain our original object, the pacification of Greece without injury, or at least as little injury as possible, to the power of the Porte, according to the plan upon which the allies have acted."³

¹ MS. correspondence at Apsley House.

² Sir W. Freemantle to the Duke of Buckingham, February 25th, 1828.

³ To Count La Ferronays, February 26th, 1828.

At the same time Dudley, with whom Lamb was more intimate than ever, reminded Prince Lieven that in the judgment of the British Cabinet the Ottoman Empire was not like some of those whose example we might cite within our own times, which, after having been invaded, resumed their domestic tranquillity and their political existence upon the retreat of the invaders; once broken up, its capital taken, and its provinces in rebellion, the recomposition of it as an independent state would be a work scarcely within the reach of human capacity or human skill. A new order of things must arise in those countries of which it now consists. What that order might be it was vain to conjecture; but we might venture to foretell that a final adjustment would not take place till after a series of troubles and disasters, for which the greatest benefits that could be supposed to arise from it could not for many years afford a sufficient compensation.¹ If the loss of her fleet enabled a Muscovite army to overrun Bulgaria and to threaten Constantinople, that was a danger to the peace of Europe, and to the freedom of our trade in the East, to which no administration could be blind; and Lamb contended always that Canning's policy which led to the Treaty of London was inflexibly to control the separate and selfish aims of the Muscovite without encouraging the Porte in its vain dream of reconquering a people whom its misrule had driven into successful revolt. Had he been living he would not have hesitated to place in the lips of royalty a plain intimation that England would continue to stand fair between the rival empires, offering aid to neither, but letting the world know that she could not behold with indifference any approach to the subjugation of the weaker by the stronger state.

It was not long, however, before a question arose which revealed the incongruity of the elements whereof the Cabinet was made up, and which, though summarily settled by the Premier's good sense, presaged disruption at no distant day. Lord John Russell moved for a committee of the whole House to take into consideration the propriety of repealing the Test Act, by which dissenters would have been excluded from municipal and other offices were it not for a bill annually passed suspending the penalties for its infraction. The retention on the statute-book of a penal law affecting conscience, long after its purpose and its provisions had become obsolete, admitted of no constitutional defence. But the newly formed administration were afraid to begin to give way; and Huskisson had no better plea to offer for resisting the change than the invidious one that the removal of statutable disabilities from the dissenters would make the sense of grievance on the part of the Catholics all the more intolerable. The conclusive answer, if any were needed, to this half-hearted excuse lay in the fact that the Catholic Association had warmly recommended petitions for the repeal of the Test Act. But the case was too clear for argument. Palmerston, Grant, and Lamb, felt bound by the obligation of official

¹ To the Russian Ambassador, March 7th, 1828.

loyalty to divide with their leader ; but most of the Canningites out of office left the House without voting, and the motion was carried by a majority of forty-four, in which were included Duncannon and George Lamb. It being clear, from the numerous defections in the ministerial ranks, that the old spirit of exclusion was gone, the minority in the Cabinet urged that the opportunity should be taken of yielding gracefully and betimes to public opinion. The Duke wisely and promptly agreed to a change of front, difficult and awkward as the proceeding might be ; and Huskisson was authorized to state, on behalf of the Government, that, bowing to the decision of the House of Commons, they would cordially support the bill. It passed through all its stages with little controversy, and was supported in the Upper House, to the horror of Lord Eldon, by his versatile successor on the woolsack.

One of the last measures of importance carried by the Liverpool administration was the Sub-letting Act, applicable only to Ireland. For many years a constant theme of censure by economic writers and reports of select committees had been the excessive partition of the soil for the purpose of creating forty-shilling freeholds. Crowds of sub-tenants were yearly multiplied, not only impoverished by usurious exaction, but who were subjected to the risk, and often to the loss, of what little they possessed by process of distraint for default in payment of rent, by the middle-man under whom they held. Nothing but a disabling law would, it was supposed, check this fertile source of disquietude and misery ; and in 1826 an enactment was passed rendering null and void sub-leases or sub-assignments of land, without regard to the depreciation of the interests for which fines had frequently been given by the primary lessees. Unable to enforce the payment of rent from the small occupiers, the middle-men began, wherever they could, to serve ejectments ; and agrarian suffering and disturbance were thus rendered greater than before. Petitions couched in terms of bitterest complaint continued to pour in from the central and Southern Irish counties, and Lamb was appealed to by Hume, H. Grattan, and others to bring in an amending bill, which should mitigate the hardships complained of, if not to remove them altogether. Good Irish landlords like Lord Fitzwilliam and Mr. Brownlow deprecated, on the other hand, any sudden reversal of recent legislation, as tending still further to unsettle the respect for law in the minds of the people. The Chief Secretary admitted the inconsiderate and improvident rigour of certain provisions in the statute of 1826, but declined to encourage the demand made by the Catholic Association for its absolute repeal. He had in contemplation an amending bill, which he hoped might in a great degree assuage the evils which had been pointed out ; and with this assurance the discussion was allowed to drop. Before an opportunity was afforded for the consideration of his remedial measure he had felt it his duty to quit office ; and nothing further was done until four years later, when, as minister for the Home Department, he carried through the

Upper House an amended Sub-letting Act, introduced in the Commons when Mr. Stanley was Chief Secretary for Ireland.¹

Sir Francis Burdett had charge of the Catholic Relief Bill upon the last of many occasions on which it was presented by an independent member. With the exception of Brougham, the great orators were gone who had formerly pleaded in its favour, wisely, but in vain. The Ministerial bench was still divided on the question, Peel manifesting more than his former skill and tact as a debater, and successfully disguising his conviction that the cause was lost, which he still incited those who believed in him, persistently to defend. The Secretary for Ireland felt it due to the position he held not to remain silent or acquiescent after the statements of principle and of fact that had fallen from the Home Secretary. On constitutional grounds he must controvert the maxim that laws deemed fundamental in the settlement of the kingdom at the Revolution could not be changed without endangering the stability of the throne, and fatally altering the historic unity and character of Parliament. It was impossible to believe that the active intelligence of a great nation would submit for any lengthened period to be bound by the edicts or enactments of a distant and dissimilar age. Adaptation to new circumstances and modification of old provisions were inevitable in the current of national life ; and it was misleading and mischievous to teach the unthinking and the timid to look with dread on mutations that were inevitable. Fears of this kind had been industriously excited previous to the union with Scotland. It was said that to admit a body of representatives brought up under a different system of jurisprudence, and zealously devoted to a different creed and method of church government, would destroy the homogeneous nature of the legislature ; but experience had speedily dissipated these apprehensions, which were now entirely forgotten ; and so it would be when they had admitted, as sooner or later they were certain to do, a reasonable number of Catholic members from Ireland. If the temper of the community, disabled from holding political rank or performing political service, were as bad as had been described, and as inimical to the constituted Government of the realm, that was but another reason for bringing to an end the anomalies and absurdities which put a whole people out of temper and alienated their affections from those whom they should be led to honour and obey. But the great measure was still unhappily delayed. The last opportunity of yielding to considerations of national justice and generosity was lost ; and the fatal notice to the people of Ireland was given, that until they could exact redress by the open threat of force they had no chance of obtaining it.

The cause of Parliamentary Reform seemed just then to have as little prospect of success. Sweeping proposals were no longer brought forward, but Lord J. Russell and Mr. Tennyson brought in bills to transfer respectively the seats forfeited by Penryn and East Ret-

¹ 2 & 3 William IV. c. 17.

ford, by reason of proved corruption, to Manchester and Birmingham, neither of which at that time possessed representatives. The Commons passed the former measure, but the Lords postponed its adoption, and were understood to be disinclined to pass it. The Cabinet, at the instance of Peel, resolved that the seats for East Retford should be conferred on an agricultural district consisting of the hundreds around the delinquent town; but Huskisson had declared in his place that if but one borough only were disfranchised, Birmingham should have the seats. On the 19th of May, when the East Retford bill was pending, Lord Sandon, as a moderate reformer, claimed the fulfilment of this pledge, which would have left the Upper House the option of conferring the seats for Penryn on a rural district. Huskisson, who had acquiesced in the Cabinet in Peel's view, was in a dilemma, and sat during the debate wavering and perplexed. Before he could make up his mind what to do the division was called. Peel gave him a reproachful look when he saw that, without explanation, he was about to break his word given in council; and the irresolute minister, tormented by self-distrust and the obvious discontent he had provoked among his colleagues, went home, and ere he slept wrote to the Duke, offering to resign. His Grace thought he had behaved ill, took him at his word, and forthwith forwarded his letter to Windsor. Palmerston laughed at his over-scrupulous friend next morning, and with Dudley undertook to rectify the error. They saw the Premier, who coldly intimated that the resignation might still be withdrawn; but this was a humiliation they could not recommend, and further parleying proved in vain. With Huskisson all Canning's friends, including Lamb, retired from the administration, and Lord F. L. Gower became Secretary for Ireland.

Jerden called on him and persuaded him to resume his contributions to the *Literary Gazette*. They had previously been casual, but now became more frequent, being chiefly criticisms on theological or ethical works. Some of his reviews were of plagiaristic or platitudinarian volumes of sermons, and are spiced with keen, though not irreverent, humour.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE LORDS.

Fifty years gone by—Catholic Emancipation—William IV.—Change of Government.

PENISTON, first Lord Melbourne, died on the 22nd of July, 1828, in his eighty-third year, leaving his estates in Derbyshire and Hertfordshire to William Lamb. A note to Lady Holland announced the

event, which took place without suffering, his sister Emily having been for some days in close attendance with him upon his father.

A sense of sadness crept over him as he paced The Dell, where he had so often loved to linger in the indolent enjoyment of summer life. The unfallen foliage of the oaks and beeches on either side made it still a spacious shelter from the winds of the outer world. But the voice of spring was long since mute, the golden gladness had passed away, and the hue of autumn seemed to presage the darkening season of decline and of decay. Youth and maturity were passed. The lot had fallen to him in pleasant places; and though late, he had come into possession of a goodly heritage. Honour, love, ambition, troops of friends, he had all; and if he had not always made good use of opportunities, he could not reproach himself with having idly or wilfully neglected them. He had read thoughtfully as much as, or more than the majority of men of his day; he had loved, how fondly, and endured how patiently, and forborne how tenderly, none living knew. The hope of posterity had not been denied him; nor a place in the first assembly in the world. Yet what did all avail to quench the unslaked thirst of sympathy, purpose, occupation? Learning, criticism, and philosophy might make men listen to his talk, but they had not given him the energy or perseverance necessary to build up even as much as Sallust built to keep in memory his name. The partner of his youth, with all her faults and errors, he loved better than any woman he had ever known. She had survived his confidence, though not his affection; and had worn herself out with waywardness ere she was old: and the son she had borne him, now come to man's estate, remained childish still, and without giving any hope of mental manhood. For five-and-twenty years Lamb had been a member of the House of Commons, a favourite there, seldom refused a hearing; the intimate of its greatest men, and for a season the occupant of a difficult post; yet he had not made a speech worth remembering, and the Cabinet—the crown of parliamentary strivings—had never been conceded him. In full possession of faculties the world called excellent, with health and strength unbroken, his time his own, with fortune ample, and a name which, though new and hitherto undistinguished, he might yet ennoble,—public life lay open to him as ever, and with his dislike of trouble and contention, the more tranquil region of the House of Lords was not distasteful. But he was lonely and listless, disdaining to repine, yet haunted by regrets. Half a century spent and gone, and how little to show for it! He would have given a great deal to have had a fervid, even a fantastic faith in anything worth working for. He had been born a Whig, bred a courtier, drawn by conviction into Canningism, and persuaded to retain office under the Duke of Wellington. But Whiggery was said to be worn out. There was no longer a Court genial, generous, or gay; Canning was dead, and the great soldier's administration seemed tottering to its fall. Utilitarian levelling like that of Bentham he regarded as nonsense. State parsimony like Joseph Hume's he thought a pettifogging blunder. Radicalism after the

manner of Hunt and Cobbett he called mere ragamuffinism. He envied Stanley, as he said, the equal pleasure he took in fighting a main of cocks and defending the abuses of the Established Church. He coveted Palmerston's light-heartedness and india-rubber temperament, and Lansdowne's delight in the arts and in the duties of hospitality. Althorp's devotion to his wethers and short-horns, and Holland's happiness in his great dinners and amusement at my lady's whimsicality, were alike to him marvels of contentedness. He was inactive, yet he was not at ease. He felt that he had as keen an insight into motives and as firm a grasp of the tendencies of things as any of them, and he could not reconcile himself to subsiding at fifty into a country gentleman that did not hunt, or a peer that voted by proxy. The forecast of Charles Fox and the estimate of Castle-reagh, repeated in her last days by his mother, recurred to him in his solitude and recalled him from despondency. He would try again, try on; but how? While he pondered an unexpected shadow fell upon his path that looked like the realisation of hope long deferred. It proved illusory, and vanished into nothing, as out of nothing it almost seemed to come; but it changed the whole condition of the man, and served undoubtedly to hasten his advancement to the first rank in his party.

Late in August Mr. Greville mentions a party at Stoke, during which he asked the new Viscount if the rumour was true that he had been offered the Admiralty. "He said he had never heard of it." Yet the rumour had its significance. The Duke of Clarence had just been compelled to relinquish the post of Lord High Admiral; and for every reason it was of importance that a return to the usual mode of administering the naval department by a board of commissioners should be justified by the character of efficiency, its members, and more especially its president, enjoyed. That the ex-Secretary for Ireland, who had never been in the Cabinet, should hear himself talked of as a probable First Lord of the Admiralty in a circle closely associated with the Court could not but sound like an augury of things to come.

Irish affairs were fast drifting near the rapids. O'Connell's election for Clare, in defiance of his legal ineligibility, seemed to have dazed his adversaries and crazed his friends. It was a moral *coup d'état*, which proved irreversible. His opponent, Vesey Fitzgerald, the most popular man in his county, had all his life been an emancipator; yet, because he had become a member of the now distrusted Cabinet, he was driven from the representation by an overwhelming majority. O'Connell himself had hesitated to make the experiment, and when it succeeded, hardly knew how to turn it to account. Parliament was still in session, but he did not demand admission to St. Stephen's to claim the seat. He contented himself with franking letters and delighting the multitude by allowing them to call him "The Member." All the autumn lively debate arose at every dinner-table as to whether he would attempt to take his seat. In one of these convivial discussions Plunket asked Chief Baron O'Grady what he thought. His learned

brother replied, "I think he will, although he said he would." The Catholic Association, freed from even the nominal inhibition of a statute never put in force, revelled in the enjoyment of unbridled power, and served notices to quit on all county members whose names were not found upon its roll. Adhesions and subscriptions poured in from Nonconformists in England, and from not a few fugitives of 1798 settled in America. The spirit of ascendancy for the first time seemed fairly daunted; and, to crown all, Canning's memorable question became practical and pressing—"What is to be done when the extinguishers take fire?"

Lord Anglesey, who had been chosen Viceroy because George IV. had "implicit confidence in his dash and devotion," began to feel the ground going from under him. He sought counsel from the Chancellor, but found him very much in the mood of Macbeth when he exclaims, "There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here." Trusting him without reserve, he imparted to him his own deepening sense of the untenableness of the position he had been instructed to hold. The Chancellor had the same wish as Lamb to meet the agitators face to face, and hear for himself what they had to say. Lord Cloncurry, in accordance with his wish, invited O'Connell to meet him at Lyons, the residence of his lordship in Kildare; and Sir Anthony was much interested and amused on the occasion. If the incident was not formally noticed as a matter of reproof from Downing Street, it was probably because the Viceroy himself had become the absorbing object of royal suspicion. He, too, had been a guest of the malcontent Lord of Lyons, an indiscretion not to be mutely endured. The Premier "could not conceal from him that his visit and those of the Lord Chancellor to Lord Cloncurry, and the attendance of his lordship at the Roman Catholic Association immediately subsequent, were not circumstances calculated to give satisfaction to the King."¹ Lord Cloncurry's account of how he came on a single occasion to be present in the dreaded assembly was, that multitudinous marchings in Tipperary had been announced for a day then near at hand, and that the authorities were full of apprehensions of a serious breach of the peace. He offered, with Mr. William Curran,² to remonstrate with the popular leaders upon the danger of allowing these demonstrations to proceed; and, there being barely time for interposition, they had waived all scruple and sought an interview, which proved successful. When it was concluded in one of the committee-rooms O'Connell naively said, "While you are here you may as well come in and see our meeting." The mediators thought they could not refuse, and were of course cordially received; but neither of them appeared on the scene again. The Viceroy replied with warmth that the fidelity of his life to the person and government of his Majesty ought to have shielded him from mistrust or misgiving; and he continued his

¹ Duke of Wellington to Lord Anglesey, November 11th, 1828.

² The son and biographer of the celebrated orator.

invitations to Lord Cloncurry as before. His presumption in seeming to anticipate the inevitable, and the extreme imprudence of his language in public and private led to his recall. Some of his letters to the Duke had been laid before the King, who was highly indignant at their dictatorial tone ; and his Grace, though personally attached to him, was heard to complain of his insolence to himself. Vesey Fitzgerald, being asked about his removal by Melbourne, said "he had done remarkably well, but the rock on which he split was his vanity."¹ On receiving the intimation of his recall Lord Anglesey showed the Duke's letter to Mr. George Villiers, who communicated its contents to Shiel, with whom he called soon afterwards on O'Connell. The Liberator seemed greatly cast down by the intelligence ; anticipated nothing but a policy of arbitrary repression ; and altogether caused them so much uneasiness as to what he might be impelled by the unlooked-for incident to say or do, that they insisted on staying to dine with him, partly in order to discuss all possible contingencies, and still more to prevent his being left to less cool-headed companionship during the evening. When they parted they fancied that they had persuaded him to refrain from comment in his speech at the Association on the morrow. But such tidings could not be kept secret, and he had no choice but to give utterance to the sense of disappointment that everywhere prevailed. The revolution already planned and matured by the Government was inaugurated by the sacrifice. The Duke of Northumberland, a moderate partisan of resistance, was named Viceroy. Lord Anglesey's departure was marked with every demonstration of popular sorrow. Accompanied to the place of embarkation by many persons of distinction and a vast multitude, his parting words to O'Connell were, "Agitate, agitate, and you will succeed."

At the opening of Parliament on the 1st of February, 1829, "William, Viscount Melbourne, took the oaths and his seat in the House of Peers."² The royal speech on the same day recommended both Houses to take into consideration the expediency of settling the Catholic question.

The interval between the announcement of the great measure and its formal introduction was spent in conjectures as to how many would avow themselves converts ; whether O'Connell would take his seat for Clare, or whether he would be excluded by a special clause of the bill. He arrived in London on the 9th, and was immediately called on by Ellice, Burdett, Ebrington, Hume and others, most of whom urged him to dissolve the Catholic Association, and so take away all excuse for the threatened measure for its suppression. He told them that until the bill was carried he would not propose to break in pieces the instrument which had compelled the offer of surrender. He could not tell what the Lords might do, sinister rumours being afloat as to

¹ Greville, 'Memoirs,' i. p. 150.

² Lords' Journal, lxi. 5.

the Duke's failure to enforce compliance with his right-about-face policy.

A stringent Act to put down the triumphant Association was made a condition precedent of the Relief Bill. It passed rapidly through the Lower House, with brief and formal protests, but without serious let or hindrance. In the Upper House, Anglesey, who could not forgive his recent recall, indulged in eulogy *ad invidiam* of the tact and talent displayed by the Catholic leaders ; and Lord Longford taunted ministers with not having executed the former Suppression Act or come to Parliament betimes for greater powers. Melbourne replied :—

"It is impossible that I can allow the observations which have been made upon the conduct of the last two Governments in Ireland to pass, without troubling your lordships with a very few words upon the subject. The noble lord says that the Government of 1825 having determined on a bill for the purpose of putting down the Catholic Association conducted itself extremely ill, because it did not, when it found the act prove inoperative, come to Parliament for further powers. I beg to tell the noble lord that the bill in question was introduced, not only on the responsibility, and by the advice of my noble friend,—the then Attorney-General for Ireland, and now a member of this House (Lord Plunket),—but that it received the sanction, generally, of his Majesty's ministers, at that time forming the Government, and particularly of the noble and learned Earl (of Eldon), who at that period was the adviser of the Crown, and Lord Chancellor of England. That learned peer bears as much of the responsibility of what was then done, or omitted to be done, as can by possibility be placed to the account of my noble friend the late Attorney-General for Ireland. The noble lord says the second Government was still more culpable than the first, because powers were placed in the magistracy of Ireland, who were members of the Association ; and he argues that Government were altogether responsible for such appointments. The noble lord has undoubtedly great experience as respects these appointments in England, but he is wholly ignorant of the practice which is pursued in Ireland. The Lord Chancellor, there, appoints the magistrates solely and entirely on his own responsibility, and an appointment is no way to be considered as the act of the Government ; but at the same time, I must say, that when there were so many individuals in that country,—persons of character and property,—who were eligible to those offices, whether they were Catholics or Protestants, to adhere to any rule of exclusion would have been vain. I readily admit the insufficiency of the law of 1825, and the causes of that insufficiency have been very ably stated by the noble duke. That bill was designated by one of the first lawyers in Ireland, the "Enabling Bill," inasmuch as it gave to the Catholic Association a power that it did not before possess. And what was the consequence? Why, no sooner were the provisions of that bill known in Ireland, than the Association advertised meetings to be held as *under* that Bill—under

the sanction of that very law, by the passing of which it was intended to effect the demolition of the Association ! I have heard it asked in this House—and I was astonished at the question—what was the reason that the law of 1825 had proved inefficient for the purpose for which it was intended ? I will answer that question in two words—Catholic disabilities were the cause which rendered that act inoperative. It is impossible for any Government to act with proper energy, when it finds its arms borne down by a sense of injury and injustice in respect of those over whom the power of that Government extends. I beg leave to say that the present measure will, in my opinion, share the same fate as the former Acts, if it be not followed by one of grace and concession. It may have the effect of putting down this Association and similar Associations ; but it will be perfectly ineffectual to stay the tide of public opinion in Ireland. It will be impossible to preserve order and security to the Protestant Establishments in that country, unless his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects are admitted to the enjoyment of the blessings of the British constitution. With respect to the Roman Catholic Association, I am one of those who do not think it has contributed to the success of that cause which, we hope, is now arriving at consummation. On the contrary, I think—though, I differ in opinion from very many noble lords—that its uncontrolled violence, and its unguarded conduct, have rather impeded than advanced the great cause of Catholic emancipation. I shall give my cordial support to the bill as it at present stands, upon the understanding and expectation that it will be followed by a measure which shall have for its object the relief of all classes of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects.”¹

This was not the popular line to take, but it was the way to render effective aid in securing the great benefit of religious liberty too long deferred. For its sake he was ready to concur in the propitiatory offering to the wounded pride of authority ; and to bear his part in the sacrifice. The juncture was critical.

The Duke of Rutland and other Tory friends of Government, piqued at not having had any hint in time that would have enabled them to keep up their country repute of being in the secret of what was designed, had announced their intention of withdrawing to their country seats, and taking no further part in the controversy. Lords Eldon and Winchelsea, Kenyon and Roden prepared to rally round the Duke of Cumberland for a last stand in the trenches of the betrayed citadel. Plunket made impromptu one of his best historical speeches in rebuke of the constitutional wail of the ex-Chancellor.² But the Duke of Cumberland was frequently at Windsor, where he at last wrought upon the royal convert so effectually that serious misgivings were entertained as to his fidelity in redeeming his promise to give his assent to the Disabilities Bill. Peel's defeat at Oxford gave new

¹ 'Mirror of Parliament,' February 24th, 1829.

² 'Mirror of Parliament,' February 19th.

energy to reactionists, and George IV. told his household that they might if they pleased vote against ministers. The Duke sought an audience to remonstrate and reassure himself in his position ; but six hours, with occasional intervals, were spent in bringing his Majesty to reason. The Premier, at length satisfied, took his departure for Strathfieldsaye to receive the judges, who were on circuit. There, long after midnight, while he still sat clearing his arrear of correspondence, the Chancellor appeared, to tell him that he had been sent for, and told by his Majesty that certain clauses of the bill as brought in by Peel had not been previously explained to him, and that he could not give his assent to them if passed by Parliament. Before breakfast his Grace was on his way to Windsor, and Lyndhurst had set out for town. George IV. used every argument to excuse his vacillation, but the minister who had staked his reputation upon carrying what Pitt, Grenville, and Canning had been unable to carry was not to be talked over at such a moment, and he quitted the royal presence with a declaration that unless the Sovereign would continue his promised support upon the question he must forthwith resign. The fear of being left to the Duke of Cumberland's party, or to the Whigs, finally determined the wavering Monarch. Peel, upon his defeat at Oxford, hired for the session the seat for Westbury at an extravagant price, and introduced the Relief Bill on the 5th of March. Its liberality and completeness won hearty praise from the Opposition ; its only serious flaw being the unworthy contrivance which, by a certain turn of phrase, excluded O'Connell until re-elected. No second opinion existed among the Whigs on this point ; it was regarded by them as sheer infatuation abortively to endeavour thus to shut out the man by whom confessedly the door had been broken in. Spring Rice, who loved him not, said truly that instead of excluding him, they should pay him to come into Parliament, and rather buy a seat for him than let him remain out. Though disheartened, the opponents of the measure did not yet despair. The Duke hesitated to accept the resignations of holders of office like Lord Lowther who voted against him ; he feared to add to the exasperation prevalent among old supporters, or to rely too much upon the Whigs, who when he had done their work would, he believed, desert him. He knew that there was no depending on the King, whose irritability and caprice were the misery of all about him. Out of doors opinion was still divided. On the second reading Mr. Sadler, who had been brought in for the purpose, delivered a speech which produced a great impression against the bill. No man at sixty-seven had been ever known before to begin a parliamentary career successfully. It was said, probably with truth, that had he spoken as long and as well on any other question he would not have been one-half reported, or the following week asked out to dinner as a rising man. This did not change the significance of the fact that in him a deep national feeling found a voice to which, willingly or unwillingly, every one paused to listen. The instinct of eloquence consists, after all, in knowing when, quite as much as in

knowing what to say. Sadler had the credit of adding some votes to the minority; on the other side, the person who did best, to the delight of Melbourne and the surprise of those who knew him not so well, was Palmerston.

On the 28th of March, Lord Eldon had an audience of the King which lasted for four hours; it was the forlorn hope of the party of resistance, and when it failed the long struggle was over. Sir Robert Peel's version of what passed differs materially from that of the Earl. In the Lords the Chancellor formally recanted all his vaticinations of three years before, while Grey and Plunket had the proud satisfaction of witnessing a triumph of the great principle in the advocacy of which they had spent their lives. Some one congratulated Lord Grenville that the great measure he too had fought for so long and so unselfishly was at last about to be carried. He replied sadly that he could feel no exultation at what was called a settlement, but which in reality would certainly settle nothing. "You are not going to pay the priests;" he said, "and therefore you will do more harm than good by giving them mouthpieces in Parliament."¹

An action brought against Melbourne early in the year came on for trial on the second day of Michaelmas Term in the Court of King's Bench, putting him to no little expense, and causing him still more annoyance. He had been a frequent guest in Ireland of Lord Brandon, who had married Elizabeth, daughter of Colonel Latouche, and granddaughter of the Countess of Miltown, afterwards Lady Cloncurry. To many charms of person Lady Brandon added those which a lively disposition and an unusual degree of culture were calculated to afford. Her house was one of the most agreeable at the time in Dublin, and many persons of congenial sentiments were there to be found, whom in the rigid severance of political parties then prevailing, the Chief Secretary did not meet elsewhere. Lord Brandon was gouty, and spent the autumn at Buxton and the winter abroad; his life had not been the most domestic, and the ill-assorted marriage proved unhappy. Mutual complaints led in the following year to a separation, and to an attempt by him to obtain a divorce. With this design in view, he was, unfortunately for himself, advised to sue Lord Melbourne for damages on the alleged ground of improper intimacy with his wife during her residence in London. Mr. Gurney, with whom were associated Mr. Brougham and Mr. Charles Phillips, stated the case for the plaintiff; but the evidence given was so valueless that Lord Tenterden refused to call on Mr. Scarlett, who was counsel for the defendant; and telling the jury that "nobody could give one word of proof against Lord Melbourne," directed a rule to be entered for a nonsuit. In the ecclesiastical court, soon afterwards, Lord Brandon equally failed in the proceedings he had instituted against his wife. It is said that the array of witnesses ready to be called on the other side scared him from proceeding, and

¹ Archbishop Whately in Senior's Journal, November 13th, 1858.

prompted his counsel to withdraw the case. Dr. Lushington decided that such a proceeding could only be allowed on condition of the plaintiff's paying the costs, and this being done the miserable affair ended.

At the commencement of 1830, the breach seemed as impassable as ever between ministers and the ultra-Tory party, who still looked with desperate devotion to the Duke of Cumberland and Lord Eldon as their faithful but hopelessly baffled chiefs. The Premier and his Royal Highness were hardly on speaking terms, and few, if any, of the seceders had returned to the ranks of the party. The debating strength of the Treasury Bench was unexpectedly weakened by the sudden illness of Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, whose place as President of the Board of Trade was but indifferently filled by Sir Frankland Lewis, a careful and accomplished man, but formal, verbose, and dull. Palmerston rather disparaged Fitzgerald, whom he called fluent, but rather vulgar. Spring Rice estimated more accurately his worth to his friends and the detriment caused by his loss :—

"I grieve at his illness ; his conduct at the Board of Trade was in all respects admirable, and his zeal for the interests of Ireland was equalled by a knowledge of the actual condition of the country not possessed by any other member of the Cabinet. We Irish change so rapidly that the Duke of Wellington, Peel and Couburn are already as much outrun by events as if they had studied no later authority than Spencer and Sir John Davies."¹

The little section then led by Mr. Huskisson had been raised in importance by the speeches of Palmerston on foreign affairs. But they were all officers, and had no soldiers, or any extensive field of opinion to recruit from. The Whigs were not gaining influence, and there were rumours of defections among some of the great families. Yet after all the Duke's difficulty lay in devising measures big enough to engage attention without exciting serious antagonism, and in finding colleagues, when he wanted them, who should be at once docile in the Cabinet, efficient in office, and unprovocative of jealousy in the House. It was to this desire of personal government that Huskisson alluded when he said to a friend, the very day before his death, "The Duke will find out at last that he cannot govern England with men only who will move at the word of a drill sergeant." But for the present he was resolved to try. Peel had submitted to be shorn of his personal influence with clergy and squirearchy, and he felt that he had no power of resistance till it had time to grow again. Lyndhurst was too easy-going and self-indulgent to differ about any matter of mere opinion ; his sole conviction was that the best thing in life was to be Keeper of the Great Seal. Aberdeen and Ellenborough could hardly be said to occupy as yet a space in the public eye of leading importance ; and the rest were what Brougham used to call eleventh-rate men.

¹ To J. Abercromby, January 9th, 1830, MS.

As the meeting of Parliament approached, reports thickened. His faithful correspondent kept Lord Lansdowne informed at Bowood of such as were most believable. Edward Ellice had come to town bringing Lord Grey's last word, that "if the Duke conceived an union of all parties unconnected with the Government was impossible, he never was so wrong in his life." Melbourne was of course one of the most available, because one of the most many-sided and most popular elements of such a projected combination. In one way or another he had intimacies, if not relations, with each of the sections whom it was thus hoped to combine, and his personal influence to that end Lord Grey well knew was all the more likely to be effective because his air and tone were more than ever those of banter and indifference. Huskisson was said, on the score of health, to be desirous that Palmerston should take his place during the session as spokesman of the surviving remnant of the Canningites. This was obvious policy with respect to the ultra-Tories and to the Liberals, many of whom felt a distrust of Huskisson not entertained towards the ex-Secretary at War. To enlist rank and file, Palmerston was put forward as recruiting sergeant.

Before the meeting of Parliament, Lords Cleveland, Grosvenor, and Darnley had given in their adhesion to ministers; and the names of the Duke of Bedford and Lord Jersey were included by the gossips in a list of moderate Whigs who were ready to rally to their support against royal reaction. But these were fitted, as Spring Rice said, rather to serve as reinforcements for the back than the front bench, where everything depended on the Home Secretary's encyclopædic power of talk. Brougham made people laugh at Brooks's by announcing that the session would open with a change in the standing orders, allowing Peel to speak any number of times (not exceeding thirty) on all questions.¹ The rank and file of Opposition were ready indeed to be led to the attack on any point that might appear exposed; but if the Premier had any legislative policy he was inflexible in his resolve to keep it to himself; and even the newspapers could suggest nothing more tempting of topics for adverse criticism than *ex officio* prosecutions of the *Morning Journal*, than neglect of agricultural distress and the want of vigour in our foreign policy in the Levant. Not a muttering was heard, however distant or faint, of the storm already threatening in the horizon and soon to sweep into comparative forgetfulness all the common elements of parliamentary fret and fume. Lord Althorp and his friends, Parnell, Graham, Thompson, and Baring, were full of economics and busily engaged with subjects of retrenchment, about which the politicians proper cared not a jot, as ministers were believed to be ready to outbid them in paring down, provided always the Windsor and Whitehall pension lists were not touched. But in the diaries and letters of the period scarcely a word is said about Parliamentary Reform.

¹ Letter to Sir John Newport, January 18th, 1830.

The two Houses met on the 4th of February, and the temporary break-up of party ties caused by late events was more strikingly displayed than ever. Sir Edward Knatchbull moved an amendment to the Address, declaring the prevalence of distress to be general, and not, as ministers had advised his Majesty to say, only partial. Brougham and Sadler concurred; and O'Connell had the gratification, of which he had dreamed so long, of hearing his own voice in the Chapel of St. Stephen. Curiosity, dislike, sympathy, and at length admiration of his suasive tone and fine delivery secured him breathless attention, and at the conclusion ungrudging praise. Who will venture to say that he understands or can realise the intoxication of that hour? Many triumphs had been his before, and many awaited him, of which the world took more heed. There was nothing peculiarly apt or telling in the speech itself; nothing he did not far surpass on subsequent occasions. But no occasion could for him have the exquisite satisfaction of this. He had been shut out, and he had broken in, assuring ingress not for himself only, but for his race and creed. And there he stood alone, their leader, representative, chief, the welcomed by many, courteously received and recognised as worthy to be there by all.

Lord Holland made an amusing speech on Greek affairs, quizzing the "Athenian Aberdeen" with effacing the inscription by Canning of national sympathy on the ruins of ancient freedom. Melbourne backed his friend with vivacity and vigour. The "travelled Thane," as his poetic namesake called him, made a poor defence, but the Premier covered his retreat in his own fashion. Robert Grant, listening on the steps of the throne, though his sympathies were the other way, whispered to Greville, "He speaks like a great man."¹

A few days afterwards Melbourne was less fortunate. Frederick Lamb, whose abilities began to be recognised in diplomacy, had published, on the eve of the session, a pamphlet on Portuguese affairs, denouncing what had been done in favour of Don Miguel by the advice of ministers and their immediate predecessors; and Melbourne fraternally undertook to urge the same view in the House of Lords. Not having been in the Goderich Cabinet he felt himself free to disapprove of Lord Dudley's language in the affair of Terceira as well as that of Lord Aberdeen. But his temerity drew down on him severe chastisement. The Duke and Lord Lansdowne concurred in excusing our tacit acquiescence in the acts of the usurper; and Lord Goderich spoke better than usual in support of both. Mr. Greville, who heard the debate, condemns Melbourne for not having got up his case better, and says that his manner was confused and his tone indiscreet. It was perhaps the only instance in a parliamentary life of forty years in which he severed himself on a question of importance from his political friends. They all regretted his failure, which was ascribed by some to passing indisposition, by others to want of judgment. The experiment of privateering he never tried again.²

The first public meeting of the Birmingham Political Union took

¹ 'Memoirs,' February 13th, 1830. ² Greville, 'Journal,' February 19th and 21st.

place on the 17th of May, Mr. Muntz in the chair. The council recommended petitions in favour of Lord Blandford's bill to expel all placemen from Parliament, abolition of rotten boroughs, repeal of the Septennial Act, and adoption of household suffrage. Their advice was accepted by an excited assembly, who went, however, much further, denouncing the Pension List and the flagrant abuses and jobs in all public departments. The keynote of complaint thus struck was re-echoed far and near. The allegations of distress were reiterated and intensified, until men esteemed for their knowledge and judgment, and who were supposed to have the best means of obtaining information, were led to believe that a state of anarchy was imminent.

Such was the condition in which George IV. left the realm. Unhonoured and unloved he passed away, and the folds of oblivion fell rapidly and silently over the recollection of his worthless name. Yet of many acts of hospitality and kindness Melbourne could not be unmindful. From boyhood he had been to some extent a favourite with the King; and though painfully conscious of his faults and weaknesses, he shrank from joining in the censure unsparingly pronounced upon them.

In appearance, habits, and demeanour, his successor was in every particular his opposite; and for a season spared no pains to win the smiles and salutations of the crowd. He did not understand that princely clap-trap goes for as little with hard-driven artisans as with coxcombs of quality.

"It was well known that the Duke of Clarence had little of that peculiar pride which is called dignity; that he was at times half crazy, and at no time fit to be left to his own guidance. He had made these things more than sufficiently notorious during the time he held the office of Lord High Admiral, from which it became necessary to remove him. As king, his deportment was just the reverse of that of his late brother. Instead of shutting himself up and excluding himself from the sight of the people, he went about challenging popularity. He walked in the streets, he rode in an open carriage with his queen, and set the crowd shouting and vociferating, waving hats and handkerchiefs like parish school children at a holiday show. These were joined by the other royalists, no longer a majority of the people. The rest stayed away or took no heed of the folly; and, as Burke had said of the same sort of people in his time, indulged in the gloom of their discontent. The King nodded and laughed and lifted his hat to the silly people, and was exceedingly delighted. The Queen was just the contrary of her husband as well in appearance as in conduct; and the mob soon began to take a dislike to her."¹

One of the first acts of the new Sovereign was to direct that the Duke of Norfolk should be named a Privy Councillor. The compliment to his Roman Catholic subjects was not the less appreciated because it was paid to the first noble in the realm, whose exclusion was a relic of

¹ 'MS. Political Narratives,' by Francis Place, 1830, i., p. 32.

intolerant rule, abrogated in law, but not yet in fact. Melbourne took means for conveying to the King how cordially he and others approved of the spontaneous exercise of royal favour, and family estrangement did not prevent him from congratulating his Grace on his taking the seat at the Council Board so many of his ancestors had occupied.

Administration had escaped defeat, and with a new sovereign and a new Parliament they might hope that the bitterness of late resentments would gradually die away. The Premier had unbounded confidence in his own power of managing the Upper House; but he was not at ease regarding the deficiency of debating power in the Lower, which was indeed palpable to all. Palmerston thought Ministers wretchedly weak, and that they would be out-debated in a moment if questions were to arise in which the Whigs chose vigorously to attack them. Peel was their sole reliance, and he had lost weight by his recent change of opinion. Vesey Fitzgerald was a good fighting speaker, but not a favourite with the House. Goulburn was very indifferent. Murray could hardly say a word, and Herries was absolutely mute. But where could they look for reinforcements? The Duke would hardly like to take back the Canningites as a party, and individually none of them were disposed to join, lest they should be too far out-numbered in the Cabinet to be able to make their opinions felt on any question of importance. Palmerston thought the Duke would like better to get in some of the rising Whigs, who would help in debate and succumb to the weight of his authority in council. But Lord Rosslyn's appointment had made more enemies than friends.¹ Nevertheless in July 1830 overtures were made to Melbourne to ascertain if he with Palmerston and Grant would join the Government. Without Huskisson and Lord Grey he said it was impossible for him to take office. To Huskisson the Duke did not object; but Lord Grey had spoken of him both publicly and privately in terms that must prevent their acting confidentially together. After Huskisson's death the proposal was renewed, this time through Palmerston. Lord Clive was authorized by the Duke to ask him to return to the Cabinet and to inquire who were his friends. He replied Melbourne and Grant; but that they would be unwilling to join without Lansdowne and Grey. The Duke was ready to assent to the three first mentioned, but not to the others, and instead of these suggested Goderich. Palmerston declined to regard him as any sufficient substitute; and left town for Paris, considering the affair at an end. On his return at the end of a fortnight the Duke asked him to call at Apsley House. The interview lasted six minutes; he said he could make room, he thought, for Grant and Melbourne; but further he was not prepared to go. Palmerston maintained a reconstruction of the Cabinet to be indispensable if any fusion was contemplated. He had by this time begun to estimate the great changes that were taking place in public opinion respecting Reform; and invited a conference on the subject to meet at

¹ Letter to the Hon. Wm. Temple, June 14th, 1829.

Stanhope Street, to which came Melbourne, the Grants, Denison, Binning, Lyttelton, Graham, Warrender, and others. They were not all agreed, but he and the Grants and Lyttelton had made up their minds to support the motion of which Brougham had already given notice on his return for the West Riding of Yorkshire. When J. W. Croker was therefore sent to persuade him to reconsider the Duke's offer a few days afterwards, Palmerston asked what the Duke meant to do upon the question, which was rapidly becoming the dividing line between parties, and on hearing Palmerston's resolve, Croker said, "good-bye," for it was clear they would never sit together in office again. Melbourne, always apt to take less sanguine views of public affairs, gravitated somewhat more slowly to the conclusion that parliamentary reform was peaceably attainable; and his mind was imbued with all Burke's horror of violent revolution; but when he found that not only Holland House and Woburn, but Lansdowne House and Broadlands half inclined to accept Brougham as a standard-bearer on the question, he came to the belief that to help to guide the inevitable was the most conservative part that he could play.

The death of Huskisson, in September, ripened the tendency of the Canningites to absorption in the Liberal party. Melbourne thought him more highly qualified than any of his rivals; for he understood profoundly the true principles of trade, and was yet so free from dogmatism or asperity as to be able to mollify the prejudices that beset their adoption.¹ His yielding temper and versatile disposition created doubts of his being governed by high principle; and his consenting to retain office in January 1828 under the Duke of Wellington was a mistake, the effect of which Melbourne thought irretrievable; such, however, was not his own opinion, and to his over-anxiety to pay court to the Duke on the fatal occasion of their meeting at the Manchester Railway, the accident was generally ascribed which caused his death. Bereft unexpectedly within two years of their greater and their lesser leader, the Canningites were now not a sheep without a shepherd, but as sheep-dogs without a master. By official standing and experience, Palmerston may have thought himself entitled to the vacant position of chief. The repeated proposals of the Duke were fairly calculated to encourage such a pretension; Melbourne's indolence, Grant's timidity, and the friendship of both tended to foster its development. But events were at hand that speedily swept into oblivion any schemes of the kind, causing Melbourne definitely to resume his place among the Whigs; Dudley, Binning, and Wynn to fall back into the ranks of the Tories; and Palmerston finally to break with the latter, and cast in his lot with the former.

In the autumn of 1830 the Home Office was no place of rest. Throughout the autumn an uneasy feeling as to the future pervaded all classes. Political associations in the manufacturing towns were multiplied, their objects varying with the complexion of local suffering or the humour

¹ Greville Memoirs, 14th Sept., 1830, ii., p. 46.

of local leadership, but all betraying a wild hope of social redemption by means of political change. The spirit of disaffection in the rural districts took less organic form. In the darkness of ignorance that might be felt, its hand was uplifted against property. Machinery of various kinds tending to dispense with unskilled labour was assailed with curses and with blows. The harvest was no sooner garnered than the ricks were set on fire; and threatening notices, signed with the ominous pseudonym of "Swing" were affixed to the gate of the farmyard and the forge, none would tell by whom or why. Decrepit officialism ascribed all to the Paris revolution of July; Birmingham patriotism set all down to the want of little shillings and one-pound notes; Manchester and Glasgow politicians ascribed it all to prohibitory duties; and the Benthamite Radicals thought every man a fool, or worse, who did not see in it the want of universal suffrage, annual parliaments and vote by ballot. Sir Robert Peel had grown daily more dejected at the state of the country and more dissatisfied with the want of determinate policy in the Government. Dining with a small party at Apsley House early in August, he somewhat abruptly asked the Duke, "In the event of a rising here, similar to that in France, what steps should be taken at the outset to resist it?" His Grace replied, "If wide-spread, and in anything like force, it would be a very difficult thing, and must depend entirely on circumstances." The results of the general election were not reassuring, and the attempts made to obtain strength for the administration ended in disappointment. The Home Secretary waxed more and more desponding as rural crime and urban agitation grew apace. He believed that the existing fabric of Government was doomed; and he told his old tutor, Bishop Lloyd, that if once the break-up of traditional authority began, he did not think the monarchy would last five years. Almost every day he found at the Home Office letters threatening his life, or putting him on his guard against some dreadful conspiracy, and it is said that at last he had hardly resolution to open any of which the address was at all suspicious.¹ Outward appearances were kept up till Parliament met; but with the announcement that ministers would not suffer the King to visit the city in the month of November, the mask of executive self-possession dropped. In the words of Lord Wellesley, it was "an act of intrepid cowardice;" and it proved irretrievable.

Ministers admitted severe distress, but said its pressure was partial. Sir E. Knatchbull moved an amendment to the Address declaring that the Sovereign had been misinformed, and that the suffering of the people was general and beyond description. One hundred and five voted this; and its rejection, after the language used in debate concerning it, spread additional alarm.

"Here was enough, and more than enough, coupled as it was with declamations out of doors, to make those who take opinions on trust

¹ Sir D. Le Marchant was so informed when under-secretary in 1847. 'Memoirs of Earl Spencer,' p. 208.

believe that the country was on the verge of bankruptcy. Here was enough to alarm the timid and to excite the working people; to whom no change, as they thought, could do any harm. In consequence a persuasion, to a greater extent perhaps than ever before, prevailed that a break-up was at hand, though many who held this faith did not know what they themselves meant. Many persons whose station in society and whose general knowledge ought to have convinced them of the absurdity of entertaining such notions spoke to me on the terrible state of all trades, and prophesied that the time was at hand when the stoppage of trade, commerce, and manufactures would be complete and a great and terrible change would be effected."¹

It was popularly expected that the speech from the throne would intimate at least a desire for peace abroad and a willingness to reform at home. It wantonly ran counter to both anticipations. The Belgians were scolded roundly for their ingratitude in insisting on a repeal of the union with Holland, whose Sovereign was described as an impartial and paternal ruler; and lest the analogy should be missed, royal threats of chastisement were held out against all who should abet seditious schemes or foster hopes of organic change in any portion of the realm. Place dined with Bentham in the evening alone, and when a copy of the King's speech was brought to him the old philosopher imagined that such expressions would not have been hazarded without some previous soundings of temper of the Peers at all events, and a reliance on their support of the policy forthshadowed. He augured ill for the future at home and abroad, and his forebodings seemed to be confirmed by the unanimous vote of the Upper House in favour of an address in reply, which, according to custom, was a mere echo of the speech. Great was his surprise and glee next morning on reading the memorable commentary of the Premier, who in answer to some measured words of Lord Grey about Intervention and Electoral change, declared the existing system of representation to be as nearly perfect as human wisdom could make it, and that so long as he was minister no alternative would be proposed. "He has thrown away the scabbard," said Dudley as they left the House: "No," rejoined Melbourne, "the sword with which he might have parried attack, and maintained the position for a good while." Place was in ecstasy. He urged Hume and others to keep the Duke in office by all means, until the irresolute Whigs should have made up their minds to a comprehensive and practical measure of reform; for his Grace could no longer do any harm, and the worst to be feared was from their too cheaply winning the personal game of office. Writing to Hobhouse, who had asked for his opinion, he said: "Pray do all you can to prevent the unwise conduct of your friends in resisting ministers in such a way as may compel them to resign. Abuse their proceedings as much as you please, but beyond that do nothing to prevent them from sinking as low as possible; aid them then to work themselves out of office, and it will be quite soon enough. I fear and abhor a premature

¹ MS. "Political Narratives," by Francis Place, 1830, i., p. 24.

change.”¹ In the same letter he says, that should the Duke go in procession with the King to the Mansion House, there are many who would not shrink from shooting him. Hunt’s threat of heading 20,000 petitioners for redress of grievances he disbelieved; but “Thomas Atwood proposed in writing to enrol an association not to pay taxes, if ministerial interference should produce the probability of a war with Belgium; and I believe something of the kind will be done.”² Many rich men are willing to take part in it. Every shop in London would be closed, and bank notes would not be taken. A violent revolution would inevitably ensue.” Atwood’s language was clearly indictable. Place framed a declaration in hypothetical terms pointing in the same direction, but postponing any resolution until Government had done some specific act tending to commit the country to war; and this many respectable traders signed. But the Opposition in Parliament pressed ministers on Sir Henry Parnell’s motion to reduce the Civil List, and after a brief resistance, conducted so languidly that several near friends and adherents were not brought down to vote, they were left in a minority of twenty-nine. Lord Worcester, who was too late to vote, brought the news to Apsley House, which he had heard on his way, that *they* had twenty-nine in the Commons; and till the party broke up, none of the guests were aware that “they” were the Opposition, nor was it till some of them met again at Madame de Dino’s³ later in the evening that they learned the truth. In better times a hostile vote snatched in this way might have been rescinded; but no attempt of the kind was made. Peel was supposed to be glad of the opportunity to shake off a weight of responsibility, without either compensating popularity or power, and when the Cabinet met next day they decided at once to resign.

Retrenchment was generally desired; and some species of parliamentary reform was deemed inevitable, but there was nothing like an agreement among the half-dozen sections of Opposition as to where reform should begin or where it should end. Had Peel been allowed an unfettered discretion in dealing with the motion of Brougham, he would possibly have succeeded in setting Whigs against Radicals and Scotch Covenanters against Irish Catholics, thus deferring for a season the settlement of the question and a change of Government; but the Premier, like all his predecessors and nearly all who have succeeded him, was impelled by some inscrutable impulse to commit official *felo de se*. It is far from clear that Wellington could have been put into a minority on any great question, had he acted with his habitual prudence, and waited for the development of Brougham’s project of reform, which there was good ground for believing was far from being matured. His anathema by anticipation against all change, however moderate, sealed the doom of his Cabinet, and saved the impetuous but perplexed member for Yorkshire from the grave responsibility his electioneering promises involved.

¹ To J. C. Hobhouse, November 8th, 1830.

² Idem.

³ Niece of Talleyrand, who did the honours of Ambassadress.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME SECRETARY.

The Grey administration—Home Office—The Duke in Hampshire—Anglesey and Stanley—State of Ireland—First Reform Bill.

ON the 16th November Earl Grey was sent for by the King ; he took counsel first with Lansdowne and Holland, and with their concurrence sent for Althorp, and told him that unless he would undertake the leadership of the Commons as Chancellor of the Exchequer he would at once decline the task of forming a new administration. Not without difficulty did he prevail on his reluctant friend, who had been warned by Lord Tavistock the night before that the responsibility was likely to devolve upon him ; but he was unable to overcome his unaffected misgivings as to his own fitness, and his genuine antipathy to the restraints and burthens of office. He looked forward to a continued residence in town with aversion ; and no feeling of ambition or desire of power weighed in the opposite scale. Palmerston, now the ostensible head of the Canningites, was ready, and indeed so eager for the post that he waited on Earl Grey in the course of the afternoon, and offered himself for it.¹ But though it was universally felt that without him, Melbourne, and Grant no Cabinet could be formed, Grey was immovable in his resolution, and the recluse of the Albany was compelled to yield.

There was hesitation for some days about the disposal of the Great Seal. Melbourne, who had sat in Cabinet with Lyndhurst, and understood his flexibility, thought he might with advantage be retained. He had never found any difficulty with him ; he stood well at Court ; he was ambitious, fond of luxury, and in debt : why not keep him on ? Brougham coveted the Rolls ; but this would have made him overruler of Whigdom. The Attorney-Generalship was offered instead. This would have left him but an out-door servant of the Cabinet : "The Great Seal or nothing," was his angry reply. The Duke of Bedford, who was consulted confidentially, took his part, and deprecated the scandal of throwing over a faithful and energetic friend for the favour of the compliant Lyndhurst, who was consoled, however, with the office of Chief Baron, it being understood that the holder should not be conspicuous in party warfare. Lady Lyndhurst thought he had been trifled with by the new Premier, and she refused to speak to him when they met, though they had been intimate. It is certain that Melbourne, Althorp, and the majority of their colleagues thought it desirable that Brougham should be got out of the Commons, and lulled, as they imagined, to repose on the Woolsack. The Bar laughed, Mr. Sugden sneered, and William IV., who had occasional glimpses of political forecast, assented not without reluctance. On the other

¹ Le Marchant: 'Memoir of Earl Spencer,' p. 212.

hand, the *Times* pronounced the appointment admirable, and the London University was exceeding glad.

A very general expectation prevailed that Mackintosh would be included in the new list of ministers. Holland, who appreciated justly his marvellous attainments and true elevation of political thought, much desired it, as did Lansdowne and Althorp. But Grey entertained a decided prejudice against him. "He thought him a time-server, and rather a flatterer. He did not do him justice, and avowedly did not like him."¹ The friends of Sir James had consequently to be contented with his appointment as Judge Advocate, in the hope that eventually he might be more suitably rewarded. The philosopher was too honest to affect indifference to the disparagement he did not deserve; but he could not afford to be left out altogether when his party was coming in. Too proud to complain, he chafed in silence, and tried to forget among his books the injustice that attends unequal conditions of birth and fortune. Disappointment, however, preyed upon him, and ere his vaguely promised turn came he had ceased to pine. Even in sarcasm to compare him with men, who by dint of acreage, effrontery, or complaisance, from time to time won their way into Cabinet office, would be to trifle with the dignity of a truly noble reputation.

It was not long before the descrimination of the Duke in his estimate of the men whose aid was best worth seeking, and whose adhesion betimes might have prolonged his ministerial existence, was fully vindicated. While Lord Anglesey's impetuosity and imprudence inflamed agitation in Ireland, unexpected diligence, promptitude, and vigour was from the first shown by Melbourne in dealing with a state of turbulence and crime in England long unexampled. To follow the ablest minister of the cvicted party, in the Home Office, he was chosen at a crisis the most critical in domestic affairs. The popular cauldron was already seething with social discontents, and the additional ingredient of organic change was in the new Premier's hand ready to be flung into it. If it should boil over, and conflagration follow, he well knew that for him all the high hope and lofty pride, and historic aspirations, and condescending patronage of the country, with whose fate and fortune the master-thought of his life was to associate his name would be swept away beyond a chance of retrieval. For the credit of the incoming party, for the safety of the realm, and specially and emphatically for the safety and the credit of a Prime Minister at sixty-nine, it was all-important to place at the head of the daily administration of domestic affairs a man who understood them, whose good sense would tell him without prompting what to do, and in whom courage and good-humour would not fail in the day of trial. It is impossible to believe that, having to choose from a crowd of associates and aspirants of every degree of talent, influence, rank, and fortune, Grey would have perilled the splendid chance for which he

¹ Lord Lansdowne to the author.

had waited half a century by giving the Home Department to any but the man he deemed most fit for it. Why did he regard Melbourne as most fit? Not because he brought to the performance of its duties technical knowledge of tape-istry; for he had not held during twelve months the secretaryship for Ireland, and he had never been in any other office. Not that he had a knack in spinning the staple or weaving the web of Acts of Parliament; for in four-and-twenty years he had never framed a clause or moved to bring in a bill. Not that he was a prize-fighter of renown in St. Stephen's ring; for it may with confidence be said that not half-a-dozen persons could recall an instance wherein a speech of his had produced any remarkable effect. It was certainly not because he pressed his claims to prominent and important office; for there never was a man more given to make little of the gifts that he possessed, or to exaggerate more his own shortcomings. Want of regular occupation from the time that he had left the Bar had begotten in him desultory habits of all kinds, calculated to render the punctual discharge of multifarious official duties peculiarly laborious. He would probably have been satisfied with the Duchy or Privy Seal, and would certainly have preferred one of the other offices whose walls are not of glass, and whose occupants are consequently left unobserved to perform their functions at their own time and in their own way. The distinctive qualities which marked him out as fit to be placed at the head of the civil Executive seemed from the first to have struck Holland, who probably knew them best, and who was himself beyond compare the finest judge of character, and, on the whole, the most impartial and disinterested man of whom the First Minister took counsel. His clear blue eyes rested fixedly on Melbourne, and if any doubt had previously existed in the mind of the Premier it would have been dispelled by his advice, and the recollection that no one would be more acceptable personally to the King. What, then, were those distinctive qualities which recommended their possessor so irresistibly? William IV. liked him because, as he used to say, "he was a great gentleman;" by which he meant that under all circumstances he felt that he could appeal not only to his sense of honour, but to his generosity and genuine loyalty to the state. Lansdowne valued him for his veracity and highmindedness; Holland, for the wisdom of his wit and good-nature of his candour; Grey, for his indomitable spirit, which he knew would quail neither under the displeasure of the Court nor of the multitude. With Palmerston and Grant he had been bound up for three years, and they were of course more than satisfied to see high distinction accorded him, and to know that so large a share of the Government patronage would be dispensed by hands like his. With the personal tastes and theoretical opinions of Althorp he had little sympathy; and with the impetuosity of Stanley, the impatience of Durham, the inappeasable restlessness of Brougham, he was constantly amazed, sometimes amused, and often very angry. But they all grew to liking him and trusting him for the transparent frankness and directness of his dealings, whether in great

affairs or small ; and while among themselves there were occasional jealousies and squabbles, none of his colleagues during the time they served together ever had a difference with him, or a misgiving with regard to him. To the outer world with which he came in contact personally the charm of his manner was its perfect unaffectedness. Instead of making speeches to deputations, he talked matters over with them ; instead of ceremonious bows and mysterious nothings, in answer to complaints of hardship or injustice, he would set them at their ease by a friendly chat, and without pledging himself to do what they asked, promised to look into it and see what could be done. The pomp and platitude of office were to him an abomination. Where resistance and rebuke were required, he pronounced it with earnestness and emphasis, in simple words, and in accents grave but gentle. Sometimes he would read the unreasonable a lecture, and sometimes adjure the misguided not to be led astray by evil counsel ; and when he deemed it deserved he would heartily commend and praise, and whatever he had to say, he would say it exactly as the impulse moved him, for he never officially intoned the service.

On assuming the duties of the Home Office, he found a state of things beset on all sides with social perplexity and political alarm. The respect for property, which for generations had been an almost unbroken rural tradition, seemed to be suddenly melting away. Incendiary fires lit up the darkness of the hungry night throughout thirteen of the Southern Counties. The Duke of Buckingham wrote from Avington to the ex-Premier :—

“ Nothing can be worse than the state of this neighbourhood. I may say that this part of the country is wholly in the hands of the rebels. There are two troops of dragoons and a few marines in Winchester. The 42nd started from Southampton at nine o'clock this morning. But they are already separated in different divisions, in consequence of different riots. 1500 rioters are to assemble to-morrow morning, and will attack any farmhouses where there are threshing-machines. They go about levying contributions on every gentleman's house. There are very few magistrates, and what there are are completely cowed. In short, something decisive must instantly be done.”¹

By the same post the Duke of Wellington received from Sir William Heathcote a letter equally alarming, and both were forwarded without delay to Whitehall.

One of Melbourne's first acts was to issue a circular calling on the magistracy, in the then disturbed state of the country, to act with promptitude, vigour, and decision. The open acts of violence and the secret and malicious destruction of property daily taking place demanded that the powers intrusted to the magistracy should be exercised with a firmness and vigour which are not required in ordinary times. Measures which might strengthen the civil force of the country, by uniting and bringing it together, and giving it the power and

¹ November 22nd, 1830. MS. at Apsley House.

efficiency which arise from communication and union, were loudly called for ; and for the purpose of assisting them in obtaining this object, in maintaining the authority of the law, they might rely on the most steady and effectual support of Government. The Duke acquainted Melbourne that he was going at once into Hampshire, and would report as soon as it was possible to dispense with the services of the troops, which he knew were called for elsewhere. At midnight he wrote from Strathfieldsaye :—

“It appears that yesterday a mob of three or four hundred persons did a great deal of mischief in the neighbourhood of Kington. They went this morning to Mr. Chute’s, about five miles from hence towards Basingstoke. They were returning towards Woleston, an estate recently purchased by me from Sir Peter Pole. They had levied a contribution at the time. The magistrates of Berkshire and Hampshire had removed a detachment of Guards from Reading to Aldermaston, which followed the mob. The magistrates at Basingstoke moved the Lancers from that town as soon as they heard of the approach of the mob. They were thus inclosed between the two detachments, and the whole were taken. I am informed that the pressed men were allowed to go away ; the ringleaders, to the amount of seventy-one, were detained and brought into Basingstoke this evening, the amount of troops employed being small, twenty Guards and twenty Lancers.¹

In other counties the work of pacification was not so easy ; and to stimulate the organisation and concert, without which the scattered resources of authority must prove inadequate, a confidential letter was sent from the Home Office on the 25th of November to the Lord Lieutenant of each county, of which the copy addressed to the Duke of Wellington ran as follows :—

“In consequence of the acts of outrage and violence which have taken place, and still continue to take place, in different parts of the country, I am commanded by his Majesty to urge upon your Grace in the strongest manner the necessity of taking, with the least possible delay, such measures as may be effectual for the repression of tumult, the preservation of the public peace, and the protection of the properties and lives of his Majesty’s subjects. For these purposes I am assured that your Grace will feel that the utmost diligence and energy should be exerted in concerting measures with the gentry and yeomanry of the county, in assembling and strengthening the civil force, and in disposing and arranging it in such a manner as may secure its general union and co-operation. In order that your Grace’s efforts may receive the most effectual support and assistance, I have the honour of inclosing the copy of a letter which I have addressed to all justices of the peace, mayors, and other magistrates having jurisdiction in the county over which your Grace presides. Reposing the firmest reliance upon your Grace’s zeal, it is unnecessary for me to

¹ To Viscount Melbourne, November 23rd, 1830.

recommend the most prompt and immediate personal superintendence of those parts of the county in which insubordination and disorder may unfortunately prevail ; but it is my duty to represent, that if any circumstances should prevent your actual presence in such disturbed districts, it is greatly to be desired that your Grace should lose no time in appointing a Vice-Lieutenant, under the provisions of the 46th of George III. c. 90, s. 45. Under the present circumstances I shall wish to hear from your Grace as speedily as possible after the receipt of this letter.”¹

On the following day Melbourne wrote privately to the Duke, to whom on this as on every other occasion he was careful to pay the highest consideration and deference :—

“I have just received your letter of yesterday. If your letters are not acknowledged officially, or as punctually as they ought to be, you must attribute it to the great pressure of business. We are to have a Cabinet to-day at four, but perhaps I shall be so hurried as not to be able to write to you after it. We shall send down a special commission as speedily as possible, and a very able and active solicitor, Mr. Talents, will go to-night to Winchester to consider the cases, and to obtain and arrange the evidence. We intend the commission to be for Hampshire and Wiltshire, but I apprehend, upon consideration, Berkshire would be included, as I apprehend a good many have been taken in that county. It should, however, sit at Winchester first. With respect to yeomanry and volunteers, the course I have taken hitherto is to supply those who have actually embodied themselves with arms ; I am a little afraid of being hurried by the vehemence of the moment into the adoption of any expensive and comparatively inefficient system, which it may not be easy afterwards to get rid of. However, I am fully sensible that the spirit of the gentry, etc. etc., must be excited and encouraged in every way, instead of being chided. Any proposition of this nature which you will send me I will sanction. And perhaps you will favour me with your opinion upon the subject, and will try to direct the spirit of the country into the most useful channel. What do you think of the measure of calling out the pensioners, the magistrates’ writ or order to be issued to direct them to be sworn in as special constables? The magistrates have this power at present, but they think it might be strengthened by such an order.”²

Early in December a special commission was issued to try the offenders, with whom the jails were full. In the towns the working classes, though they condemned rick-burning, sympathised with the blind despair of the farm labourers, whose abject plight and bitter penury they well understood.³ The artisan and working classes knew that from the gathering-grounds of poverty in the surrounding districts the influx of want and labour into the towns was increasing, and in bad times

¹ To His Grace the Lord Lieutenant of Hants, November 25th, 1830.

² November 26th, 1830.

³ Place, i. p. 84.

swamping. Some were for baling out the tide by emigration, some for damming it up in its well-head by a more stringent poor law, some for drying it up by free imports of foreign corn; but all agreed that hanging for arson, or transportation for agrarian cabals to raise wages, could not reach the core of the evil. The new Home Secretary saw this clearly, and while he felt obliged to maintain the authority of the law, he bethought him of an expedient never before tried in England in like circumstances, namely, to make confidence with some of those whom the despairing multitude trusted, and induce them to offer wise and temperate counsel, dissuasive from violence, and pointing to relief, if time were given for its legislative realisation. He sent his brother George to Francis Place, whose ability and honesty he had long appreciated, both as a supporter and an opponent at elections; and who he therefore felt sure would not abuse the confidence thus reposed in him. "We are of opinion that you can write to them with more effect than any one else;" and then he went on to explain how his friends thought they should be spoken to.

"This is always the way with men in office: they tell you what a clever fellow you are, and then they patronise you and instruct you, and show by their instructions that they think you may be a clever fellow—only—then, it is by being their tool that you will be a clever fellow. I never show any symptoms of dislike to any such persons, but let them talk on until they say all they have to say: this was the case with Mr. Lamb; and when he had done speaking I gave him my reasons for thinking any writing addressed to people at the present moment must be mischievous, and he was satisfied the best way would be to refrain from making any address to them just now. After a rather long conversation with him on the state of the people and their opinions, I took the opportunity of speaking to him respecting reform of Parliament. I found that he knew very little of what was really passing. The information he had received appeared to be very vague and defective. I told him much that was new to him, and my views as to the future. I said that the right course for his friends to pursue was straight and clear, but that I feared they would not take it, and so did all the men whom I knew whose information was extensive, and whose opinions were likely to be correct, but at any rate were such as ought to command attention. That Lord Grey had on the preceding Sunday told a friend of mine "that whatever proposition for reform might be made by ministers, it must be such an one as the House of Commons would entertain;" and I observed if this rule were adopted, nothing but mischief could result from it. That if the people were thus handed over to the borough-mongers, there would be a tremendous outcry against ministers; and their popularity would be destroyed, their present small majority would become a minority, and they would be thrust out with ignominy. That if, on the contrary, they proposed a plan of reform which would destroy corruption, by which the borough-mongers would lose their control, and the members be returned by the great body of the people having any sort of property,

so that they might recover their just influence over their representatives, ministers would be lauded and supported far more than any administration ever had been. That it seemed almost certain, if they did so, that they would be out-voted and compelled to resign, but that they would fall back upon the people, the whole of whom would make common cause with them, and compel the King to restore them to office, with full power, as far as his influence and power went, to accomplish a thorough reform in the Commons House. That if they were driven out of office for having introduced such a measure as that described, no ministers the King could appoint would be able to keep their uneasy seats, and remain in their hateful offices for six months, probably not six weeks ; and when they were ousted by the people, and their friends restored, they might carry any measures of reform they pleased. Mr. Lamb assented to this, but cautiously and properly refrained from giving any distinct opinion except on one point. I said, clear as was the course ministers ought to take, and easy as it would be found if it was courageously followed up, I did not think his friends had the courage to take it and resolutely to pursue it ; to this he replied '*he feared they had not.*'"¹

Mr. Stanley's appointment was generally approved. His defence of the Church Establishment in Ireland² could hardly be forgotten by the Protestants, nor his votes in favour of emancipation by Catholics. His management of an extensive estate in Munster was painstaking and popular ; and his personal energy, love of work, and love of humour would, it was supposed, certainly make way. Qualities of mind and temper which tended to countervail his many talents and advantages were then unknown, and under other circumstances might have less early become conspicuous, or have never retained predominance in popular estimation. But at the outset the auguries were all favourable ; troops of friends were loud in felicitations, and some whose experience gave them a right to counsel tendered their advice. Old Sir John Newport told Lord Althorp that what he most desired was, that Stanley should have an under-secretary at the Castle uncommitted to the evil ways of past rule, and fit to be trusted implicitly to carry out the policy of his chief ; and when he thought it seemed likely that the old permanent staff would be left unchanged, he went the length of saying that his support could not be given to his friends in office unless Gregory were removed. Spring Rice told this next day to Stanley, backing it with the expression that it was the only point on which he would volunteer advice.³

The Secretary of the Treasury, who understood the wants and perplexities of Ireland well, and who feared the impetuous and imperious temper of the new Chief Secretary, endeavoured to induce Melbourne to take from the outset a guiding as well as controlling part in legisla-

¹ MS. Political Recollections, etc., part i.

² Speech on Mr. Hume's motion, 1826.

³ Letter to Stanley, November 18th, 1830.

tion for that portion of the realm. "He had a long interview with him on the subject of Irish measures, and he gave him in the shape of a memorandum all that occurred to him on the Grand Jury Laws, with the heads of a plan which he undertook to lay before the Viceregal Government, and on other subjects the full and frank results of his opinions." He likewise endeavoured to impress Althorp with his views, but he "felt disposed to fling all the responsibility on the Lord Lieutenant. This, he adds, will never do; the failure will be complete."¹ Never was forecast more quickly or literally verified. Just in proportion as the Home Secretary was induced to forego the guidance and control of Irish affairs, they became a source of disappointment and disrepute to the Administration. The sound principles advocated by him when previously filling subordinate, and destined to be developed fully when he afterwards gained supreme executive power, were forgotten during the next three years, and the result was, in every way disappointing.

Lord Anglesey's appointment a second time to the Vice-royalty of Ireland had been hailed with general satisfaction, and if Melbourne and Lansdowne estimated more accurately than others his capacity for civil administration, they were only too willing to hope that the zest for popularity which in 1828 had led him astray would be countervailed by the opposite tendency already discernible in his youthful Chief Secretary. But ere quitting London the rare opportunity which circumstances had unexpectedly afforded the Whigs of conciliating Ireland was rashly thrown away. In a long conference at Uxbridge House, to which O'Connell had been frankly invited, Lord Anglesey announced his intention of retaining the law officers of the old Government, as well as the Under-Secretary, and thus persisting in the same system of religious exclusion which rendered Emancipation politically a dead letter. O'Connell did not conceal his surprise and indignation; and declared at once that such a course would array against the new ministers the whole Catholic community, who had theretofore looked upon them as old and faithful friends. It would moreover furnish him, he said, with conclusive arguments in favour of his still undeveloped project of Repeal. Were it left an open question he was content not to make it a shibboleth at elections; and if practically all distinction between Protestant and Catholic were put an end to at once and for ever in the distribution of office, the Irish people would begin to believe at last in the law, and in the principle of equal justice. For himself he asked no favour; and not a word was said about the Church Establishment. But if partisans of ascendancy were still to be officially preferred, he could not do otherwise than raise the standard of opposition. Expostulation, however, was in vain. Lord Grey had unfortunately confided to the indiscretion of the gallant Marquis the choice of his subordinates in the Viceregal Executive. Bereft of the hope that his personal reappearance in Ireland would reawaken the

¹ To Lansdowne, January 3rd, 1831, MS.

cheers of the populace as they escorted him to the shore on his recall in 1828, he sadly set out on his ill-starred mission.

O'Connell, he was convinced, was bent upon desperate agitation. This, he adds, would produce no change in his course and conduct. For the love of Ireland he deprecated agitation as the only thing that could prevent her from prospering. He prayed for peace and repose. But if the sword was really to be drawn and the scabbard thrown away; if he, who had suffered so much for her, was to become a suspected character and to be treated as an enemy; if for the protection of the state he was to be driven to the dire necessity of again turning soldier, why then he must endeavour to get back into old habits, and live amongst a people he loved in a state of misery and distress.¹ On the 19th of December Lord Anglesey wrote requesting that no friend of his in Ireland would think it necessary to meet him on his landing and thereby incur a share of his unpopularity, proofs of which he anticipated. His mortification at the manner in which he was likely to be received overflows in his letters at this time, his sole offence being, as he avers, "a solitary law appointment."² This was the elevation of Mr. Doherty to the Chief Justiceship of the Court of Common Pleas, which O'Connell regarded as a wanton affront. The reception of the reappointed Viceroy was not what his morbid sensibility led him to fear. Many persons of distinction met him at Kingstown and accompanied him to the Castle.

But he encountered on his arrival many evidences of popular hostility. Agitation, which he himself had sanctioned as the only effectual means of extorting justice, suddenly broke forth anew. The Relief Act was declared to have been a cheat which it was not meant to carry into operation; and as neither Whigs nor Tories, according to O'Connell, would keep faith, there was nothing left but to insist on a separate Parliament for Ireland. Mr. Stanley, who had been made the special object of vituperation by the great demagogue, sent him a challenge, which he scornfully refused upon the ground that he had already fought one fatal duel. A proclamation was issued putting down public meetings, and a criminal prosecution was commenced against O'Connell.

Had the law appointments in Ireland been filled up as they had been in England, reparation would have been made to the Liberal Bar for their long denial of fair promotion; and law advisers would have been given to Lord Anglesey who would have kept him from engaging in the deplorable personal conflict into which he precipitately plunged. But while Brougham and Denman were placed in office in England; in Ireland neither Whig nor Radical was treated with the semblance of confidence or fair play. Lord Plunket was indeed too formidable to be overlooked; but Holmes and Wallace, O'Loughlen and Perrin were practically told to stand by; and O'Connell, who in professional

¹ Private letter to Lord Cloncurry, December 15th, 1830.

² Letter to Lord Cloncurry.

standing, ability, and influence stood without a rival, instead of being named Attorney-General, as he would undoubtedly have been had the Irish Executive of 1830 been responsible to an Irish Parliament, was not even offered a silk gown. Practically this was to proclaim not only that liberal opinions were a disqualification for advancement, but, what was far worse, that religious disabilities had not been removed, the statute of the previous year notwithstanding. Mr. Blackburn was a man of learning and integrity in every way fitted to advise an anti-reform Government ; but their appointment as Attorney and Solicitor General was under the circumstances equivalent to a declaration of want of confidence in nine-tenths of the Irish people. After sixty years, its error and folly stand out as clearly as they did then, and how Melbourne and Plunket could have reconciled themselves to such a selection must ever remain an enigma.

Within a fortnight Government declared war against the discussion of Repeal, under a temporary Act passed in 1829 to prevent dangerous assemblages for political or religious objects. Lord Anglesey issued a proclamation prohibiting a meeting of trade societies in Dublin, which had been summoned to petition for redress of the grievances ascribed to the Union. O'Connell forthwith issued a manifesto calling a similar meeting under another name. The Viceroy over trumped him by a second proclamation ; and the ridiculous spectacle was continued for many days of notice and counter-notice, until at length a warrant was issued for his apprehension on the charge of inciting to sedition ; and on his being held to bail, the contest was transferred to the Court of King's Bench, in which, as then constituted, the ultimate decision could not be doubtful. After some weeks spent in arguing pleas and demurrers which were overruled, O'Connell resolved, instead of going through the form of a trial, which must have been a mere useless humiliation, to let judgment go by default, and throw upon the Executive the responsibility of putting him in prison.

It cannot be denied that both Melbourne and Holland acquiesced in a course of proceeding which neither of them would have advised ; and Althorp expressed the feelings of many of the best men of his party when he wrote confidentially : " I cannot say that I am satisfied with what is doing in Ireland. Notwithstanding the unanimous opinion of our law authorities there, I entertain some doubts of the legality of O'Connell's arrest. But as our law appointments are already censured by many, and perhaps approved by none very much, we shall be considered responsible for any blunders they may have made ;" and he thought it very possible that when Parliament met they might be turned out in consequence.¹ The fatuity of the whole course of proceeding was proved in the humiliating sequel. O'Connell had no mind to trust his fate and fortune in the decision of a great constitutional question by the Court of King's Bench as it was then constituted, and the right-minded majority of the Cabinet saw nothing

¹ To Earl Spencer, January 22nd, 1831.

but humiliation and defeat in rendering inveterate a breach between the Liberal party in England and Ireland. After a certain show of forensic skill, a truce was tacitly agreed on, and by the first of March the attention of all was riveted on the forthcoming scheme of Parliamentary reform, a statement of which by Lord John Russell was fixed for that day.

In the Court of Queen's Bench, Mr. Perrin, the leading counsel for O'Connell, withdrew his plea of not guilty, and the case was allowed to stand over until the first day of Easter Term, to the delight of all who deprecated further excitement, and the disappointment of equally unthinking friends and foes. Lord Anglesey was exultant because he had won in the encounter; the Attorney-General was satisfied, because under his advice the authority of law had not only been asserted, but was shown to be irresistible; Lord Grey was glad, because he hated the agitator, and because his defeat enabled him to tell the King that his power to stir up discontent was now at an end. This was, indeed, the prevalent impression in political circles, and was the staple of many well-turned periods in the daily press. To say that O'Connell was not mortified at having to admit himself checkmated for the first time in his life by the law officers of the Crown would be untrue. To imagine that by this defeat he was likely to be disheartened or dismayed was to wholly misconceive his nature; and to suppose that the people whose feelings he embodied, and whose passions he wielded at will, would suddenly lose faith in him was a mere delusion. Lord Duncannon's re-election for Kilkenny was ostensibly opposed on the ground of his not being a repealer; but the old popularity of his name did not fail him, and as in the case of Sir Henry Parnell, just then made Secretary at War, who was standing for the Queen's County, agitation's guns were not shot against him, and he and O'Connell met a week after as if nothing had happened. They understood one another better from that day. The great debate on the introduction of the Reform Bill was at hand; O'Connell's aid was wanted, and at the critical moment it was not wanting. The thoroughness of his support evoked the hearty cheers of all on his side of the House, his recent prosecutors not excepted.

Before the time arrived, however, for pronouncing the sentence the statute was about to expire. Ministers were already engaged in the struggles of the Reform Bill, and it was not convenient to detach a score or two of their supporters on the question.

Melbourne had not forgotten the impressions made upon his mind, when Secretary for Ireland, of the hardships caused by the Sub-letting Act. His retirement from office in 1828 had prevented his attempting their legislative remedy; but now that he had the power to originate measures, he recurred to the subject; and with a view to gain correct information, addressed the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, whose evidence before the Select Committee on all that related to the condition of the Irish people he had studied with care:—

“Although I have not the honour of any personal acquaintance with

you, I am sure you will forgive me for addressing you upon a subject which relates to the welfare of your country, and upon which you are capable of affording me useful and important information. You are probably informed that we are engaged upon a revision of the law commonly called the Sub-letting Act, and for this purpose I am very anxious to obtain some certain and actual knowledge with respect to the real extent and effect of its operation. The perusal of your evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons in the last year proves to me that no man is more intimately or practically acquainted with the state of Ireland than yourself. In that evidence I find, that the disposition (*viz.*, to consolidate farms, and eject the poorer tenantry) was encouraged and aided by several legal enactments, among which I may specify Sir John Newport's Act, next the Sub-letting Act, and afterwards the Act annexed to the late Relief Bill which disfranchised the forty-shilling freeholders. What I wish to hear from you is, how many cases you actually know of, in your own knowledge, in which tenants have been removed by their landlords by virtue and force of that law; and whether you can communicate to me the form of the notices which have been served, and whether their validity has been disputed and brought to trial; and before what courts, and in what manner the questions have been decided. I have myself made much inquiry to this effect, but I cannot obtain authentic information of any single case in which prosecutions in ejectment have taken place under that law. This difficulty will, I feel confident, excuse in your eyes the trouble which I give you by this application; and I remain with great respect, your faithful and obedient Servant, etc."¹

Bishop Doyle's reply, which doubtless contained much useful information, led to further correspondence. Melbourne wrote again:—

"I beg leave to acknowledge your letter of the 13th inst., and to return you my thanks for the promptness with which you have replied to mine. Upon reading your communication, it appears to me that the effect which you ascribe to the Sub-letting Act is actually that which the Legislature intended to produce. The object of the law was to prevent sub-letting for the future; an object which, according to your statement, is effectually attained by it. The objection generally urged against the law, and which it is intended by the new law to obviate, is, that its provisions have a retrospective effect; but with the working of the measure, as far as it is prospective, no interference is contemplated. Will you allow me to trespass so much further upon your time and intelligence, as to ask you whether you think the law, in this point of view, prejudicial or the contrary; and what is the nature and character of the enactment pointed out in your postscript, in which you observe that a law going directly and not circuitously to prevent the sub-division of land is what this country wanted and still requires."²

¹ From the Home Office to the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle, etc., February 9th, 1831, MS.

² *Ibid.*, February 17th, 1831.

The Prelate's reply to the Home Secretary set clearly in moral and political apposition the twofold working of the Sub-letting Act as originally passed. *A parte ante* it wrought uncompensated and unwarrantable confiscation. *A parte post* it might be a prudent economic restriction upon the infinitesimal partition of land. But so long as the rural population had no better employment or surer chance of subsistence than the possession of a potato-field, it was idle to expect them to submit to eviction from their miserable holdings. Intensely conservative in his love of order, respect for law, and conviction of the duty of deference to authority, he deplored the misery endured by the people, and felt bound to uplift his voice, stern as that of the prophets of old, against sordid and shameful oppression. Again and again he staked his reputation as a patriot and his influence as chief priest of his diocese in dissuading the exasperating peasantry from engaging in illegal combinations, and denouncing their resort to violence and crime ; but he appealed both in private and public to the conscience of their rulers to make without delay a provision for the destitute poor, by a tax on land, equivalent to half the tithe, which he contended ought to cease and determine. His letter to Spring Rice expounding this policy as the true antidote to revolutionary agitation, and the indispensable requisite for national peace, won the assent both of the Viceroy and O'Connell. The former pressed its adoption on the Cabinet ; the latter publicly declared himself convinced and converted.¹ But the Bishop well knew that such changes could not be easily or suddenly brought about, and that until Parliament should be reformed they were wholly unattainable ; he readily, therefore, greeted and encouraged every improvement in detail of the existing law which might assuage bitterness of feeling or mitigate immediate misery. He strongly deprecated the rearming of the yeomanry to aid the police in the enforcement of tithes, and the persistent exclusion from administrative office of all who did not profess the ascendant creed. But the Chief Secretary resented passionately disaffection to the Union and the Established Church ; both of which he persuaded Lord Grey must be maintained at any sacrifice. The Premier listened to his impetuous and imperious counsel, and the predial war began which has lasted until to-day. Isolated deeds of violence were perpetrated with impunity, and sanguinary conflicts, sometimes involving considerable loss of life, occurred in various counties. But to remove the causes of social or sectarian discontent little, if anything, was done. The state of anarchy in Ireland troubled Melbourne more than it surprised him. He used to say, "it is too bad that when the right thing was done it was done so tardily and insincerely as to falsify every reasonable anticipation, and to realise every evil augury. What all the wise men promised has not happened ; and what all the damned fools said would happen has come to pass."

Plunket had at length attained the reward of his priceless services.

¹ O'Connell to Dr. Doyle, March 29th, 1831, MS.

No one any longer contested his claim to the Great Seal of Ireland ; and no one felicitated him more heartily than Melbourne, who remembered well the tantalisation he had been forced to suffer under Goderich and Canning. "The whole aspect of the man," he said, "is changed since he has had his due. The look is iron still, but the old fine polish has come back, and the cancerous rust that was growing over it is gone." In social intercourse he again grew communicative : loquacious, or what is called chatty, he never was, but he was no longer moody or reserved. He dined out oftener in London, and at home saw more company ; and seldom suffered an occasion to pass without the mark of his wit. One of the Viceregal aides-de-camp had written a book of travels, to which he prefixed the epithet of "personal narrative." Stanley, always fastidious in composition, quizzed him as to the reason for the superfluous phrase ; and appealed to Plunket to say what a personal narrative meant. "We lawyers divide all things worth talking of into two kinds, and all that is not *real* we call *personal*."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REFORM BILL.

Ten Pound Franchise—Schedule A—Majority in the Commons—Bill rejected by the Lords—General Perturbation.

LORD J. RUSSELL, instead of claiming a seat in the Cabinet, had stipulated when taking office that to him should be confided the introduction of the ministerial measure of reform ; and with him were associated Lord Durham, Sir James Graham, and Lord Duncannon, as a committee to prepare the bill. "Durham proposed the ballot, and Graham assented from a feeling that the bill would all seem flat without it, rather than from choice. I was against it, said Lord John, and thought if adopted it would be necessary to modify our plans respecting the suffrage. Duncannon asked Althorp's advice as to what he should do, and the latter said by all means vote for the Ballot. The report to the Cabinet was accordingly in that sense, if there was to be a £20 franchise." On this point wide differences prevailed. Durham, Althorp, and Duncannon would have preferred a £20 franchise with the ballot to a £10 franchise without it. Brougham, Graham, and Russell preferred the latter. Melbourne said, "I am for a low figure. Unless we have a large basis to work upon we shall do nothing ;" and this was the judgment of the venerable Premier, who forty years before had advocated household suffrage, but who never could endure the idea of secret voting.

During Lord John's statement Hobhouse sat next Baring Wall, who exclaimed, when the long list of boroughs was read, "They are

mad, they are mad." All the Opposition seemed delighted but Sir R. Peel, who looked serious and angry, as if he had discerned that the ministers by the boldness of their measure would secure the support of the country. Burdett and I walked home together, and agreed that there was very little chance of the measure being carried. We thought our friends in Westminster would oppose the £10 franchise, but we were wrong."¹ Popular distrust held its breath, indeed, while awaiting the revelation of the ministerial plan. Place records how he sat alone in his house at Charing Cross, on the evening of the 1st of March, fearing to learn details of the scheme, which would dash the hopes strained nearly to snapping. At length a friend who had reported the first half of Lord John's speech came in and gave him the chief points of the proposed measure:—

"It was so very much beyond anything I had expected, that had it been told me by a person unused to proceedings in the House, I should have supposed he had made a mistake. We both were delighted, and we at once took measures to cause it to be known in the coffee-houses in the neighbourhood, whence it spread like wildfire. In less than an hour from the conclusion of the speech, the intelligence was spread all over the Metropolis. Next morning the joy of the reformers was excessive. Nothing within my memory had ever before produced such general exultation. Lord John treated his difficult and complicated subject in a masterly manner; it was so well arranged, clear, and simple, that no one could mistake any part of it."²

Calling next day on Place, Burdett and Hobhouse found him delighted with the Bill, and were told all their supporters were equally pleased with it. The echo of satisfaction came quickly from all the great towns, and ere the day fixed for the second reading, petitions in favour of the measure poured in. Nevertheless, looking at the constitution of the Lower House as it then existed, it seemed difficult to comprehend how it could be brought to commit patriotic suicide. The enormity of the proposal was, in Croker's opinion, its redeeming merit: for, of course, it could never be carried. In point of fact it was only carried after two nights' debate by a majority of one. Even such a nominal success was more than had been counted on out of doors. It had come to this, that Reform was no longer out of the question. Illuminations were announced in honour of the occasion, and the windows of those who refused to affect rejoicing would it was feared be broken, according to immemorial usage. In the afternoon a gentleman called on Place from the Comptroller of the Household, requesting him to take measures to prevent mischief, and offering to provide any assistance that might be thought necessary. Place told him "any one who would spend money had the power to cause mischief to be done; but that no one had the power to prevent its being done." If any one had the power he said it would not be advisable to use it, for the

¹ Hobhouse, Autobiography in 'Edinburgh Review.'

² Place, part i. p. 30.

reasons already given to his old acquaintance, Tom Young, who had just been with him. On many occasions men in power had permitted money to be distributed to vagabonds to break windows ; clerks in office and understrappers had done as their masters wished them, to set the mob on to bawl for lights, that the exhibition of loyalty might be as complete as possible. He knew people whose windows were broken, and who complained to the magistrates ; but they were treated as disloyal persons, and told that a few farthing candles would have saved their windows ; and they were sneered at and laughed at in Parliament. If no one paid blackguards to do mischief, and there were no well-dressed rascals to hound them on, there would be no damage done, except perhaps to the windows of a few obnoxious lords. This was nothing compared to the destruction these fellows, and such as they, had perpetrated on more than one occasion within his memory ; every vagabond expected that he should be applauded for the mischief he did, and would in no instance be prosecuted. The case was now wholly altered, and every one who broke windows did so in fear of being apprehended and punished. The Opposition, who pretended that the people were giving up the bill and the ministers, and that there was a reaction in favour of themselves, would, if no windows were broken, shout victory, and hold up the circumstance as proof positive of the fact. Sooner than recommence the old system of giving money to the mob, it was better therefore to leave them alone.¹

Young had been recommended to the Home Secretary by the Duke of Devonshire as a shrewd, handy sort of man, whom he had found as purser of his yacht more servicable than men of better breeding. To his surprise, and that of others, Melbourne named him private secretary, and, as he said, made use of him as a weather-gauge when nicer instruments were off their balance. Had he checked the habitual bluntness of the man, or winced at his innate vulgarity, he would have been no longer useful. "Through him," he would say, "I am able to look down below ; which for me is more important than all I can learn from all the fine gentlemen clerks about me." By long sufferance Tom Young grew familiar not only with his chief, but with persons who could brook it less good-humouredly. But he was devoted, indefatigable, and had a keen discernment of the foibles and oddities of his master ; and save on one occasion served him sagaciously and well.

Hopes of reaction rose high. It was clear that, without a working majority, ministers had not a chance of carrying their scheme through committee, and preparations were made accordingly to fight it clause by clause. It was not thought possible that the King would be induced to dissolve a Parliament scarce eight months old to try an experiment so novel and so perilous. Melbourne did not despond, like some of his colleagues, or believe that the country would fall into convulsion or ruin if the bill were lost or the Cabinet overthrown ; but

¹ Place MS., vol. i. part ii. p. 52.

he thought they were bound to abide the issue they had raised, and prove to the country that they were steadfast and sincere. They must go on until they were stopped by a hostile vote. It came, on General Gascoigne's amendment, in the middle of April; and the Cabinet unanimously advised a dissolution.

Never were the two Houses simultaneously so excited as when the guns were heard announcing the arrival of the King to dissolve Parliament. Sir R. Peel in vain essayed to get a hearing, Burdett disputing the priority of audience. Althorp moved that Peel should be heard, but Black Rod cut short the intended protest. Sir H. Harding crossed the floor and said to Hobhouse, "The next time you hear those guns they will be shotted, and will take off some of your heads." Lord Goderich describes the scene in the Lords as even more disorderly. Lord Londonderry shook his fist at the Duke of Richmond, and the Chancellor was hooted by the Opposition peers when he left the Woolsack. Lord Tankerville said the angry lords would without scruple have voted off the ministers' heads that day.¹

Lyndhurst was sitting in the Exchequer, when he received the tidings that without previous notice the King was coming down to prorogue Parliament in person. The House of Lords was already in disorder, several peers trying ineffectually to be heard, in the midst of which his Majesty entered wearing the crown awry and betraying many signs of haste and anger. As he returned to the palace he was vociferously cheered by the multitude; and the Chief Baron, seeing clearly the error that had been committed, whispered to one of his party, "All is now lost."

The general election gave ministers a decisive majority, and the struggle thenceforth became undisguisedly one between the two Houses.

Nearly all the large towns and most of the counties sent to the new Parliament supporters of the Bill; even smaller towns threatened with partial disfranchisement did so too. The rotten boroughs belonging to Whigs were likewise thrown into the scale. Their price, however, daily diminished from the fear of coming abolition. Lord Yarborough, as guardian of the daughter of Sir L. Holmes, sold to the Government for £4,000 the next presentation to the eight political stalls in St. Stephen's appurtenant to her property in the Isle of Wight. The eight incumbents duly prayed for sudden death, and had the rare privilege of performing the part of chief mourners at their own funerals.

Reform was still a riddle, about the solution of which the Cabinet itself was not agreed; still less the legislature or the country. "The Whigs felt how feeble was their hold on the nation. They could count neither on the support of the Radicals nor the forbearance of the Tories. Some had adopted Reform from necessity, others from choice; that they should act cordially together in the accomplishment of their task was not to be expected."²

¹ Hobhouse, vol. ii., pp. 103, 105.

² 'Memoir of Lord Spencer,' p. 237.

Elated with the success of the elections, and misled by his law advisers, Mr. Stanley introduced on the 1st of July a bill limiting, in Ireland, the privilege of having fire-arms, and punishing their retention without licence in a manner hitherto unprecedented in any part of the kingdom. Not only the Irish members, Whig and Catholic, and the whole body of the English and Scotch Radicals, but even some of his colleagues on the Treasury Bench disapproved of his proposals; his exposition of the measure was listened to with amazement not to be concealed. The Cabinet had some weeks previously acceded to his recommendation that the existing Arms Act should be renewed for three years: but he subsequently adopted a variety of suggestions rendering the law more stringent and penal, and these he proceeded to embody in the bill without consulting the Home Secretary or any other member of the Government. Althorp, writing confidentially to his father on the following day, says:—

“I did not know that he had altered the bill and made it one of the most tyrannical measures I ever heard proposed. I was quite astonished, and so was Graham, for not one of us had ever heard that these alterations were to be made in it. We must stand by Stanley, but we must soften down his measure. It is a great scrape; for O’Connell will have the credit of forcing upon us any modification which is embodied in the bill.”¹

Melbourne first heard of the rash proceeding when he read the *Morning Chronicle* early next day in his dressing-room. He was very wroth; and wrote at once to the Premier his opinion on the subject. Various concessions were eventually made in committee, all of which were received in Ireland with scornful exultation. Confidence in the discretion of the Executive was dangerously wounded, and Stanley’s wild threat of disarming the disaffected population proved wholly vain. The second Reform Bill was introduced by Lord J. Russell, and on the 24th of June a majority of 106 approved its principle; the discussion of its details commenced on the 4th of July, and was not brought to a close until the 7th of September. A fortnight later Althorp, accompanied by two hundred members, appeared at the bar of the Upper House, where Lord John presented the bill which was to deprive the Lords of the power they had long enjoyed of nominating a third of the House of Commons. In the memorable debate, which lasted five nights, Grey, Lyndhurst, and Brougham outshone all others; Plunket, Ellenborough, and Carnarvon, though each in turn eloquent and effective, failed to command the same degree of interest. The speeches of Lansdowne and Holland on the one side, and of Harrowby and the Duke on the other, though full of weight were still less striking. The Home Secretary took a course peculiarly his own. Others had appealed to the remembrance of their continued advocacy of the same opinions, as entitling their earnest adjurations to be heard. His claim rested on the opposite consideration. He had argued against

¹ Letter to Earl Spencer, July 2nd, 1831.

fundamental change as long as he could consistently with his sense of duty to the throne and the safety of the nation. No man had held out longer against lifting the anchors of the state; no man had oftener opposed reform when the nation did not want it; no man was more ready to admit the possibility of its being abused if conceded; no man would have been more contented to remain without the concession. But it was clear that the nation had set its heart on remodeling this portion of its institutions, and it was worse than idle to set at nought its irresistible will. His fearless candour in abjuring past opinions when they had become no longer practically tenable was better calculated to tell upon the minds of any who were wavering than the most specious apologies for inconsistency. But waverers just then were few. The notion had been carefully instilled into the minds of conservative peers, that some measure of reform having become inevitable, they had but to reject the sweeping proposals sent up to them by the other House in order to eject their fabricators from office, and to place in their room warier and wiser men, who would be able to find means for reconciling the removal of certain electoral anomalies with the retention of what was best worth preserving in aristocratic influence. Following Lord Harrowby, Melbourne said:—

“Concurring heartily with my noble friend at the head of the Government, in now proposing this measure to Parliament, I think it my duty to state at length my reasons for supporting it. To many of the arguments of my noble friend it was impossible for me to listen with any other than a favourable ear; for they are arguments which I have myself urged elsewhere. If ever there was an individual in the country more anxious than another that the affairs of the country might have gone on without being forced to incur the hazard and responsibility which must result from so great and fundamental a change in the House of Commons, I am that person. That great philosopher and statesman, Lord Bacon, says that the difference between civil affairs and the sciences is that, while in the latter there should be nothing but change and movement, the former should rest for support on authority and reputation. Undoubtedly the perturbation arising from change is to be avoided; but then the other terms of the proposition must be observed. That which it is proposed to change must be supported by authority, consent, reputation, and opinion. If we find that the columns of that support are snapped and falling—if we find that instead of authority, there is a disrespect for all authority—if we find that instead of *consensus* there is *dissensus*—if we find that instead of reputation and opinion, there are aversion and repudiation, it is then our duty to look about us and to consider the dangerous situation in which we are placed; it is then time to propose some change, it is then time to revert to the first principles of the constitution, that we may repair the edifice which is tottering and crumbling around us. We have been told by one of your Lordships that we ought not to yield to popular opinion, that we ought

not to be governed *arbitrio popularis auras*; and that it frequently becomes the duty of legislative and representative bodies, and of all those having authority, to resist the will of the people. I readily admit the truth of that proposition. Else why have a representative body at all? The wildest democrat in existence, those who assert that all power is derived from the people, would hardly deny the proposition. No man can suppose that it is the duty of a legislative body to yield to every gust of the popular breath; no man can suppose that in questions involving the immediate petty interests of the people this should be done, much less in making those fundamental changes which affect the whole interests of a great country, and of which the people are necessarily very incompetent judges. But although it may be our duty to resist the will of the people for a time, is it possible to resist it for ever? Have we not in this case resisted it long enough? I say this the more freely, because I have on former occasions been in the foreground in resisting Parliamentary Reform. Night after night have I resisted it in another place, going far beyond some of those who are now adverse to the present measure. Wherever the flag of Parliamentary Reform was hoisted, I ranged myself under the opposite banner; if I did not lift the standard of the Constitution and call its supporters to the field, I was always ready to follow it, and went beyond others in repelling every approach to reform. I always opposed in the other House of Parliament the extension of the elective franchise to Manchester and Birmingham. I look back with great regret to the period when a motion of that kind was brought before the other House of Parliament, because circumstances connected with that motion deprived the Administration of that day of the services of Mr. Huskisson; I shall never cease to regret them, for I think, and shall, I believe, always think, that he was not fairly treated; and that occurrence, I own, first shook my confidence in the noble Duke opposite. On that occasion, however, I opposed the transfer of the elective franchise to Birmingham, because in my own heart I knew that if that proposition were adopted, it must necessarily lead to a large measure of reform, like that which is now offered to your Lordships. For why give the elective franchise to Manchester and to Birmingham? Because they have become great emporiums of commerce, daily increasing in wealth and importance; because they are full of men of opulence, of spirit and intelligence; because they have arrived almost at Imperial grandeur and Metropolitan magnificence. Such of your Lordships as oppose the Reform Bill, the noble Earl who spoke last (Harrowby), and the noble Earl who preceded him (Winchilsea), would give those towns the elective franchise because they have thus increased. But the whole country has so increased; and it seems to me, therefore, as almost all your Lordships have given up the idea that there shall be no reform, to be impossible longer to resist the adoption of the large measure now proposed, or one equal to it. The noble Earl recommended us to give time to the people; he said that on former occasions, when the

wishes of the people on this subject have been resisted, when similar claims were made and denied, everything has returned to a peaceful channel. For a certain time that may be good policy ; the argument is plausible, but all experience proves, when the wishes of the people are founded on reason and justice, and when they are consistent with the fundamental principles of the Constitution, that there must come a time when both the legislative and executive powers must yield to the popular voice or be annihilated. Two of the great arguments against the measure are, that Reform is merely used as a weapon of party, and that the popular demand for it is merely a temporary clamour that springs up whenever any general calamity occurs, and subsides when that calamity is at an end. Admitting both these arguments to be well-founded, would it not be desirable to deprive party of so formidable a weapon? But when your Lordships see that on every occasion of public calamity and distress, from whatever cause arising, the people call for an alteration in the representation, and that the call is accompanied with a deep rankling sense of injustice suffered and of rights withheld, can your Lordships suppose that an opinion so continually revived has not some deep-seated foundation, and can you be insensible to the danger of continuing a permanent cause for angry and discontented feelings to be revived and renewed at every period of public distress and calamity? Do not, my Lords, be parties to the continuance of this evil, if I must not say this great injustice. What constituted the great dangers of the system formerly pursued towards the Roman Catholics in Ireland? That it gave opportunities to those who, as it has been well observed, 'were always lying in wait to take advantage of the disasters of the country.' It gave a handle to those who were always ready to stir up sedition. The same kind of danger that the empire was exposed to by the refusal of Catholic Emancipation, it is now exposed to by the denial of reform, but to a much greater degree. The Catholics were comparatively a small minority, whose strength could always be seen and measured, but the spirit of reform has been diffused through the whole population, and the whole people may be said to be ready for commotion. The popular feeling on the subject of reform extends, your Lordships do not know how far ; it penetrates, your Lordships do not know how deep ; and the great danger is that it will break forth with irresistible violence when your Lordships are flattering yourselves that the country is enjoying general repose and perfect tranquillity, or when it is immersed in other dangers, and has no arms to resist a discontented people. Why will not my noble friend Harrowby allow the bill to go into committee? I am sure my noble friend did himself great injustice when he said that his right hand had so far forgot its cunning that he should be unable to adopt any amendments to the bill. But he has not stated one objection which does not apply only to the details of the bill, and which may not be obviated in the committee. Undoubtedly the measure is an extensive one. It does away with

the nomination boroughs ; it takes away one member from a number of other boroughs ; it alters the constituency of boroughs ; it proposes to add to the county representation—a measure which has always been proposed in every plan of reform ; it proposes a general alteration of the qualification throughout the country ; and it introduces—which is not the least important part of the bill—a great variety of regulations as to the conduct and management of elections, with a view to conducting them cheaply and bringing them to a speedy termination. I will not deny that these are great and important changes and alterations, requiring much deliberation. I cannot concur in the censure which has been passed upon the House of Commons for the time and consideration they bestowed on this very important bill. That House could not have done otherwise, and have done its duty, and no time has been needlessly consumed, no delay has been excessive, considering the great importance of the measure. But as this great measure is eagerly sought for by the country—as it is proposed by his Majesty's Government—as it has been thus deliberated upon and considered by the House of Commons, and as they, with a large majority, pray your Lordships' concurrence—will you, I ask, at once reject it? Will you, by a single night's vote, defeat the hopes of the nation, and cast away, as if it were idle and worthless, the fruit of so much care? Will you reject it on the ground that you may, perhaps, hereafter entertain some similar measure? If such be the ground of your opposition—if you now oppose the bill, promising to give a better measure hereafter—consider that such a promise is a condemnation of the present system, and the justification almost of that dangerous discontent which I have adverted to, and which your Lordships will not in that case remedy ; but you will weigh and deeply consider the step proposed to you, and pause, I implore you, before you disappoint the wishes of the great body of the people. Though all things may undoubtedly go well as long as the members of the other House act harmoniously together—supposing however, which may easily happen, that the members returned by the popular voice range themselves on one side, determined to carry this measure, and those who are returned in a manner which I need not point out were to range themselves on the other, what would be the result? Could such a contest be otherwise than perfectly ruinous? Or suppose that we should range ourselves in continued opposition to the majority of the other House and the wishes of the people, must not that lead to consequences the most disastrous? My noble friend misinterpreted the language of my noble friend at the head of the Treasury, when he inferred that the bill must not be touched or modified, and that your Lordships were to be no longer masters of the measure, and must merely register the decrees of the House of Commons. That is not the conclusion which I drew from what was stated by my noble friend, nor will his language bear such an interpretation. Nothing which fell from my noble friend can warrant the assumption that he wishes in the slightest

degree to impede or control your Lordships' deliberation. The noble Lord has asked what is the basis of the measure, and whether it is not the population? Population is not the basis of the measure. It was necessary that we should have for the purposes of disfranchisement some practical rule, and therefore the want of population was adopted as the rule to disfranchise nomination boroughs. But there is nothing about population on the face of the bill. I do not mean to deny the statements by which the bill has been supported in another place; all that I mean to say is this—that there was a necessity for some strict rule both for disfranchisement and for enfranchisement, and population was undoubtedly chosen as the rule for determining the places which should continue to return members to Parliament: but that mere population was the basis adopted for the representation of the country I distinctly deny. The whole measure goes to effect an extension of the present system of representation, and adapts it more completely to the circumstances and situation of the country; but it looks at property, at different interests, and at different classes, as well as at population. It is impossible, however, on the second reading of the bill, when the general principle of Reform is the only question for our consideration, when we have to determine whether there shall be a reform or not. [No, no!] Noble Lords are eager to disclaim hostility to Reform; every one is anxious to show that he is a reformer; and noble Lords now as indignantly deny the charge of being anti-reformers as they some years ago would have spurned at the imputation of being reformers. When that is the case, I put it to your Lordships, as reform is the general principle of the bill, and as that is now the question for discussion, whether you can now refuse to read a bill a second time of which you approve the principle. It is agreeable to the course of your Lordships' proceedings to discuss the principle of a bill before going into a committee; and if you approve of that principle, to go into a committee. Or are your Lordships prepared to say that you approve of the reform, and will not go into a committee? I appeal to the noble Earl who spoke early in the debate, and who introduced a bill in the beginning of the session, in which he took a considerable interest, but which I must say was of very trifling importance as compared to this bill, and was as inconsistent as a bill could well be, and the noble Lord pressed your Lordships to allow him to go into a committee, merely on account of the excellency of the object he had in view. If your Lordships oppose the principle of Reform, you will not allow the bill to go to a committee, but as your Lordships are all reformers, and as the bill is made to your hand, you will surely assent to the second reading, and amend and change it in committee according to the reason, the sense, and the justice of the House. If not, what alternative is there? What course will your Lordships pursue? What do you propose? If you will not allow the bill to go into a committee, and there is no other bill, what have you to offer? If it is necessary, as is stated, to appease the spirit of the people—if it is necessary to

propitiate them, your Lordships will allow the bill to go to the committee, and so spare yourselves the mortification of hereafter retracting, and of presenting some other similar bill. The arguments which have been directed against the details of the bill are fit only for the committee, and I should wish to spare your Lordships' time by not now discussing them. I will not go, therefore, into all the questions mooted by the noble Earl. I do not deny that this is a measure of great importance—that it causes great change—that it will be followed by other great changes; that other measures will be necessary to carry it into complete effect. There must be a change in the constitution in respect to ministers having seats in another place. There are some defects which may lead to other changes. I would not exclude ministers from that House, nor allow them to obtain seats there by any other means than the voice of the people. I should be exceedingly sorry to see such a change, but the bill will make other changes necessary to adapt it to the working of the constitution, and to the circumstances of the country; but to effect these changes, I rely on the elasticity of the constitution, and on its adapting power, which has preserved and improved it in times past, and will not fail, I hope, to preserve and improve it on future occasions. I am departing, however, from the rule I laid down not to go into the details, which demand more discussion than I can now give them. I must abstain, though that is doing the measure injustice, because it is not possible for me to go the length I wish. I will only implore your Lordships to consider the subject well, and not now to touch those subjects which will best be considered in the committee, but to reserve yourselves for the discussion of those details in which you are, I trust, determined to enter in another stage of the bill. Your Lordships are about to decide a great question—a question involving the peace and happiness of the Empire in a far greater degree than that great question it was the glory of the noble Duke's Administration (the Duke of Wellington) to conduct to a successful termination. There is, however, I beg leave to observe to your Lordships, a great difference between this bill and that for the relief of the Roman Catholics, to which it has been compared. That measure had been frequently demanded, and as frequently refused, till at length you were forced to forget your own previous resistance, and grant that which you before denied. You are not pledged to any opposition to this bill. You have it now in your power to grant what will be considered a boon, on which the repose of the country depends, and which is looked for with impatience. By this bill you are not bound in any manner. You have never rejected this or any similar bill. Some of your Lordships may in the other House of Parliament have expressed an opinion on reform; but as a body—as a House of Peers—you are unbound and uncompromised. You have free liberty and power to decide as you think fit, and you will come to the decision free from the influence of fear, free from all apprehension, free from all menace, free even from that fear by which a noble and

generous mind is sometimes led to rash and untimely acts—free, my Lords, from the imputation of fear. The noble Duke stated at the beginning of the debates on the subject of Catholic Emancipation, that he did not consider that he was addressing himself to your Lordships' fears. I am not of a different opinion. It is said that the great measure of Catholic Emancipation has not accomplished all that was promised. I admit that—but I would beg leave to ask what would have been now the state of Ireland had not that measure been passed into law? If the want of complete success is to be ascribed to the conduct of one man; if he has had the power to oppose the beneficial workings of the measure, and delay its advantages, I must say that the power of that man is the creature of your Lordships' hands; your obstinacy gave him influence, and gave him the power which he possesses to impede the healing effect of that beneficial law. That he should have had the power to raise obstacles to the peace and tranquillity of the country is a circumstance which I deeply and seriously lament; and I implore you to raise up no such other man, not to give a scimitar into the hands of many such men, by making the people believe that their humble petitions are disregarded, and that they must not look to your Lordships for redress. Do not arm a host of demagogues with the discontent of the people. Whatever other motives may actuate your Lordships, I implore you not to be guilty of the rashness of fear; I implore you not to be guilty of the greater rashness of delay. I will remind you of the address of the Roman Consul to his council on going to war, when he planned that masterly march which overthrew the Carthaginian general before he could unite himself to other forces—a march which, perhaps, changed the destinies of the world. What that great man then addressed to his council I will presume to repeat to your Lordships. He assured them that their safety depended on the adopting his plan immediately, and that there would be danger in delay. He exclaimed, 'Only do not procrastinate—do not make that measure which is safe, if adopted immediately, dangerous by delay.' *Ne consilium suum, quod tutum celeritas fecisset temerarum morando facerent.*"

Lyndhurst was the soul of opposition to the Reform Bill, but held back till the fifth night of the debate on the second reading to answer Brougham. He praised his rival's eloquence, but charged him and Melbourne with inconsistency, quoting their former speeches against democratic change. Lord Grey replied that these had been utterances against universal suffrage and annual Parliaments, not against the enfranchisement of thrift and trade. But had not the Chief Baron been in other days a far-going friend of Reform? Every one knew that the retort struck home; yet Lyndhurst intrepidly assured the peers that it was not true. Denman whispered Le Marchant, "Villain—No, he was a Democrat!"¹—for he had gone circuit with him, and frequently heard him advocate not only Reform, but the

¹ 'Memoir of Earl Spencer,' p. 350.

substitution for Parliament of a constituent assembly like that of France. The Lords, notwithstanding, believed in their judicial leader, who thought that, if beaten, ministers would resign. In point of tactics the blunder was irreparable; it consolidated the hitherto uncemented materials of the Reform party, and created for the first time a wave of excitement throughout the country, which even Melbourne, with all his incredulity and caution, saw must be headed, or it would overwhelm all.

By a majority of forty-one in a crowded house the ministerial bill was thrown out. Althorp wrote to his father next day :—

“It appears to me that a majority of forty-one is not to be coped with. I am sure neither Grey nor myself can stay in unless we have a reasonable prospect of carrying a measure as large as the one we have lost; and I do not see how we can say that we have a reasonable prospect of doing this in the face of such a majority. By the ordinary rule we ought to resign. I am inclined to think that this is the only mode of carrying Reform. I think it will never pass the House of Lords unless it is brought forward by its enemies, as the Catholic Question was.”¹

Melbourne leaned at first towards the same conclusion. The Cabinet met in the afternoon, and decided nothing. But in the course of the next few hours tidings reached the Home Office from various quarters of the most alarming nature. The people, who had had in general no idea that the bill was really in danger, became suddenly exasperated by disappointment; and commotion on all sides grew imminent. Mobs assembled at various places; most revolutionary language was used by persons hitherto moderate and calm; even the leaders of political unions betrayed their anxiety lest they should not be able to guide or control the passions of the hour; and not a few of the lords who had voted in the late majority expressed their anxious wish that resolutions pledging their party to a large measure of reform should be forthwith moved in the Upper House, in the hope of thereby allaying the tempest. Upon consultation, however, no agreement could be come to as to the terms to be employed, and nothing was done. The King and the Commons concurred in desiring that ministers should not resign, and throughout the country a fierce demand was raised for the creation of peers. Durham, who was ever ready to outbid his colleagues for popularity, vehemently urged this course; but the Premier, supported by Richmond, Lansdowne, Melbourne, and Palmerston, resolved to keep this expedient in reserve and until the last extremity.

The second Reform Bill was again rejected by the Lords at the instance of the Duke of Wellington, who was swayed chiefly by the advice of the Chief Baron.

Place writes in his diary, on the 9th of October :—“In the afternoon a journeyman bookseller named Bowyer called and introduced

¹ ‘Memoir of Earl Spencer,’ p. 354.

himself, and said he was in conjunction with an attorney's clerk named Powell to get up a great meeting of the working classes and others, to form a procession and present to the King at his levée an address that they should pledge themselves to stand by the King, his ministers, the House of Commons, and the bill." Place encouraged him all he could to proceed with it, and gave him a circular note with the names of many persons to whom he might show it, as well for pecuniary aid as personal assistance and reference to others; and notes to every person conducting the daily papers, requesting them to insert paragraphs; they did so, and the project was immediately made public. "I gave him a note to Mr. Young, Lord Melbourne's private secretary, and advised him to communicate freely with Young, but to tell him he did not come for either advice, approbation or disapprobation, as he had resolved to go through with the business, and to let him know that the whole of it would be conducted in an orderly, discreet way, so that no one need fear any disagreeable results. This was done; and when I saw Mr. Young I repeated what I had said to Bowyer, and advised them to keep the police and soldiers out of sight."¹

Birmingham and Bristol led the way in revolutionary projects. In the former town, a notice was issued for public meetings by the council of the Political Union to organise the non-payment of taxes until the bill was carried; and the people were told to come armed. It was impossible for Government to allow such an assembly to take place; yet an attempt to disperse it by force would in all probability have caused a violent schism in the ranks of their supporters, and thereby destroy their only chance of peaceful triumph. Fortunately the council of the Union had for its chief adviser Mr. Henry Atwood, who, whatever his speculative errors may have been, had no sympathy with appeals to violence or terror. One of his active colleagues, Mr. Joseph Parkes, a solicitor in good practice, was personally known to Place, from whom the Home Secretary constantly received information; and through him a communication was unofficially made, pointing out the folly and danger of the threatened proceeding. Parkes executed his difficult task with fidelity and skill; and the meeting was indefinitely postponed. At Bristol it fared otherwise. No sagacious leader there held the reins of popular feeling in hand; and because there was no regular organisation, it was supposed that there could be no serious peril. The entrance of Sir Charles Wetherell in a sort of party triumph, when about to open the sessions as Recorder, kindled the first sparks of turbulence, and ere many hours the city was wrapped in its flame. The magistrates at first treated the uproar with indifference, and subsequently showed deplorable want of decision. Business was suspended; the inefficient constabulary were overpowered; the houses of obnoxious politicians were set on fire, and the work of pillage began. Upwards of £300,000 happened to be in

¹ Vol. ii. part i. p. 25.

the Post Office, which would have fallen into the hands of the mob, had not one of the clerks courageously undertaken to convey it without any guard to Bath. Destruction of property and life, accompanied with many circumstances of wanton cruelty, ensued; strangely at variance with the general character of the population. Vigorous measures of suppression were taken, however, by the Home Secretary; and at the end of three days order was restored, and the principal delinquents were handed over to justice. To guard against a similar outbreak in London, discretionary powers were conferred by Melbourne on Lord Hill, and in his absence on Lord Fitzroy Somerset, to hold the troops in readiness; and no breach of the peace in the metropolis occurred.

Melbourne, speaking of the Corporation of Bristol in reference to the riots, and comparing the conduct of the people of Bristol and Birmingham, the latter of whom had been unjustly impugned, said "he had no apprehension of mischief at Birmingham, where there was no corporation. He had no doubt at all that the very same description of persons who made the riots at Bristol would at Birmingham be employed to prevent rioting."¹ "The words last quoted," says Place, "are not in the published speech, but I was assured at the time, and this assurance has since been repeated to me, that the words were used."

Faith in the security of movable property had not received such a shock since Chief Justice Mansfield's library was given to the flames by Lord George Gordon's mob. Two generations had passed away since that outbreak of bigotry in alliance with ruffianism, and the old traditional belief had come to dose again in peace. Those who had something to lose were so much stronger in England than those who had nothing, that danger of plunder and arson was as much a thing gone by as peril from foot-pads on Hounslow Heath. Suddenly the lurid blaze in which half Bristol was threatened with ruin threw a ghastly reflection far and wide over the land. What town could tell whose turn might be next? The utter impotency of the effete system of municipal watch and special constables had been proved during three days of bloodshed and rapine in the most conservative community in the realm. What would become of free-spoken and free-thinking seats of manufacture, if ragamuffinism there should catch the contagion? And what would become of London, with its accumulations of realised property widely scattered? It must be confessed now that men came to think of it, their goods were wholly defenceless should the hungry multitude, whom no man could number, take it into their heads to have a raid and a general bonfire. It was a terrible question for those in power, and especially for a Home Secretary, to whom in emergency the entire community instinctively looked in their helplessness for the means of protection and orders what to do. Melbourne did not conceal his anxiety from those around him. He

¹ MS., vol. ii. part i. p. 124.

did not believe in the possibility of any serious injury being attempted to the dwelling of Royalty or the offices of the Government. The interchange of a few communications with the Horse Guards assured him that the chief places in Westminster might easily be protected from molestation. Nor did he think the City was in much danger, even though another Lord Mayor should prove himself as great a blockhead as Sir John Key. But for the rest of the metropolis he shuddered daily, for he knew how deficient in numbers and organisation were the New Police, as they were still called ; and he felt that unless the "Haves" should volunteer to organise some method of self-protection, "the Have-nots" might rifle or burn any district they pleased, or any two or three districts simultaneously, if sufficiently remote from each other, before the glitter of bayonets could scare them from their prey. It was not without a groan and a certain amount of profane swearing that he read the bold but timely counsel given by the *Times*, that associations should at once be formed by loyal men who were Reformers, for the purpose of constituting themselves a volunteer constabulary for the defence of property and order during the existing state of things. The improbability that the busy and unarmed men of the middle classes could be got together in such numbers, and induced to submit to any sort of discipline or drill by any amount of newspaper suasion, did not allay his fears that London might, like Paris, become a hive of revolutionary sections. But he soon learned that there were many and determined men who saw in the peril of the hour an opportunity not to be neglected for fabricating a casting weight for the political scale. The men of Birmingham had already their Political Union. The leading Radicals of the metropolis quickly took the resolution of forming a similar society ; for the two-fold purpose of securing the passing of the Reform Bill and defending order, property, and law. As politicians, they felt that if the imputation of disorder and spoliation were not stamped out by overwhelming demonstrations, the cause of progress was lost ; and they knew, as citizens, that after the expectation which had been raised, the excitement and perturbation which paralysed business would never cease until the promised measure was carried. The steps by which during November the new organisation was rapidly called into existence are chronicled in the journals of the day ; but the reasons and explanations which led to each resolution, and not unfrequently to its retraction or modification, are only to be gathered from the letters and personal narratives of the chief actors in the scene, most of whom have long since passed away. One of the most graphic accounts is that contained in the political narrative of the events of the period by Bentham's friend at Charing Cross. He enumerates with pride the active men, fellow-workers with himself, whose energy and worth he lauds enthusiastically,—others who were marplots, he scruples not to brand as fools or worse ; but who nevertheless took part in rocking the cradle of the scheme of volunteering in defence of order. Among the former were Major Beauclerc, Mr. Roebuck, W. J. Fox, Colonel

Jones, and Erskine Perry. The Ultras distinguished by the name of Rotunda Men (from the place where they used to assemble), finding they could not have their way, appeared to have co-operated with the stronger and wiser majority. The general meetings of the Union were attended by several men of distinction, and drew vast audiences together. But its real work consisted in an active propagandism for the enrolment of members in separate local societies, all of them framed in exact accordance with the central model, but each being self-contained and distinct from the rest. The deputations sent to each district had strict instructions to excite their friends to organise a local union for themselves; but as soon as they saw it was about to be done they were to make it a point to withdraw; and thus to furnish no excuse for the accusation that they were infringing the statute of George III. enacted for the purpose of preventing the existence of corresponding societies. Nor was their caution superfluous. Various attempts were actually made at the time at rival schemes with the most revolutionary designs, which fell into the mistake of organising branches and appointing delegations in the hope of thereby effecting by combination of members and concentration of authority what they lacked in weight of character or position. Some of these openly attacked the transfer of property by inheritance or will; others affected to assert the right of appointing officers and constables whom all persons must be compelled to obey. So formidable did these beginnings of sedition appear that the Home Secretary, with the sanction of the Cabinet, submitted to the King for his signature a proclamation, which was issued on the 21st of November, and which warned the people against incurring the penalties of the law that forbade associations with affiliated branches, with grades, divisions, and subordination of officers, as subversive of the royal authority. At the next meeting of the Political Union the chairman thanked ministers for the proclamation, as calculated to do their society infinite service; as they had taken care not to offend against the statute as the wild and wicked counter-schemes were safe to do. Melbourne was kept accurately informed from day to day of all that was going on: he believed that Place, whatever his views and opinions might be, would not deceive him as to matters of fact; and in this he was not mistaken. In times of commotion no duty of a ruler is more imperative, yet none more difficult, than that of standing fast when sanguine or bewildered friends on all sides are shouting that something decisive must be done—they know not exactly what. During one of the not unfrequent paroxysms of the time the Home Minister was reminded of the many letters calling for some new and peremptory instruction as to the course to be taken in case of possible emergency; but neither Chief Clerk nor Under-Secretary could point out distinctly what the novel direction ought to be: “Whenever you are in doubt,” he said, “what should be done, do nothing.”

CHAPTER XIX.

PARLIAMENT REFORMED.

Correspondence with Bishop Doyle—Power to make Peers—Projects of compromise—Second Reading carried—Defeat in Committee—Disturbed condition of Ireland—Commandership of the Army.

MELBOURNE'S position at this time was arduous and anxious. Responsible as Home Secretary for the peace of the country, he had to deal continually with incidents and ebullitions of popular feeling, dangerous to neglect and still more dangerous to palter with. Every day agitation out of doors grew more and more inflamed. Scotland, usually so quiet, gave forth wild and unwonted sounds; and Ireland was ablaze with a fury of its own against Church Establishment. Bishop Doyle, who believed the movement for repeal to be delusive, sought to divert popular attention to the abolition of tithes, which practically touched the farming classes far more nearly than any question of representation. His memorable expression, in a published letter on the subject, became stereotyped as the motto of every public gathering in the central and southern portions of the island: "May the hatred of the people to the exaction of tithes be as lasting as their love of justice." Lord Anglesey adopted in principle the views of Dr. Doyle, and told the Home Secretary that the reduction of the Anglican establishment in Ireland was the only antidote to the cry for repeal. He pointed out that for this the Presbyterians of the north and the Whig gentry everywhere would coalesce, and that it presented the most feasible and tangible result which that portion of the empire could gain by Reform. Melbourne, who had voted for concurrent endowment in 1825, as a condition of emancipation, would willingly have promoted a redistribution of Church property, suited to the wants of the three denominations; but his colleagues were engrossed with English and foreign policy; and with Stanley representing the Irish Department, he saw that it was hopeless to raise prematurely the question of the Irish Church Establishment which, sooner or later, he believed must be dealt with. Lord Anglesey's apprehensions and anxieties regarding Repeal he tried to soothe as valetudinarian: for the gallant Marquis was a great sufferer from bodily pain, and was not a little mortified by his unpopularity during his second term of viceregal office. He was more disposed to give heed to the statesmanlike suggestions of Dr. Doyle, whose thoughtful letters were shown him by Sir Henry Parnell. Twice he had succeeded in breaking up the agrarian confederacies that spread terror through his diocese, though he feared their recurrence daily if a change of measures and of men were not speedily adopted.

"I have been on the best of terms," wrote the Bishop, "with O'Connell since he relinquished the agitation for repeal of the Union, and

I would most willingly labour to dissuade him from reopening that question, if the state of Ireland be taken up in a decided way by Government. But, even now, the difficulties created within the last year are great beyond belief, and are every hour increasing. I cannot account on any principle for the errors that have been committed. If anything happens to the Reform Bill, the administration is ruined in both countries; and this, in Ireland, through their own wilful blindness. It is useless to advert to the question of poor laws, or to any other, until the system in this country is changed. All my thoughts are occupied with apprehensions for the future."¹

Lansdowne, Duncannon, and Spring Rice appreciated equally the value of these views, and understood to what they pointed. After many communications with the Chancellor and the Premier, Sir Henry felt himself warranted in telling his correspondent that no insuperable obstacle stood in the way of offering professional rank and office to O'Connell, provided it were ascertained beforehand that he would accept it; and he authorized the Bishop to act upon his own discretion in the matter.² Melbourne had not forgotten the desire of O'Connell in 1827 to have a patent of precedence; and to this distinction he now argued he was more than ever entitled by his transcendent superiority to his rivals at the bar. It was, after all, but the tardy acknowledgment of a debt of justice, which ought to be no longer withheld, and upon the party now in power his recent claims were undeniable for the aid he had rendered in debate on Reform. The sagacious prelate, who was as little of a courtier as a flatterer of the multitude, had urged the expediency of giving some pledge to the popular members in London of substantial changes in Ireland, previous to the close of the session, if the country was not to be thrown into a state of anarchy during the recess.³ He thought Government were right in endeavouring to induce O'Connell to take responsible office; and believing him to set some value on his opinion, he promised he would urge it with all his might. In case of disappointment there would be time for further deliberation; but he would risk everything rather than submit to continued abuse of power against right and justice.⁴

In reply to another letter from the Secretary at War, after the second Reform Bill had been rejected by the Lords, he said:—

"I shall, as you desire, write this evening to Mr. O'Connell. He will be in the hands of the agitators even before my letter arrives; but the moment is not one that he should select for agitation, and he may pause. My (first) application to him was more successful than I anticipated; but finding how isolated was the proposal of office made to him, I fully agreed with him that it should be rejected. Does the Government, or any member of it, suppose that, seeing their acts for the last year, we can expect a change if they hesitate to

¹ To Sir H. Parnell, August 8th, 1831. ² September 27th, 1831.

³ Bishop Doyle to Sir H. Parnell, October 1st, 1831, MS.

⁴ *Ibid*, October 10th, 1831.

state, however confidentially, that there will be a change, and to what extent? or do they imagine we are such simpletons as to commit ourselves with a bad system, cast from us the means of improvement which we possess, and render ourselves, for base lucre, the byword of the age? I leave home for two or three weeks, and will remain in the neighbourhood of Dublin. I intend to pass a few days with Blake, who is a depositary of all knowledge. I shall not, however, inform him on the subject of O'Connell. I still hope, though but faintly, that your efforts may be successful. I will see O'Connell on going to town."¹

At the opening of term the great tribune appeared in court and presented his patent of precedence, which, it is needless to say could not have been issued without the direct sanction of the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of Ireland, both of whom would doubtless have agreed to follow up this beginning of administrative concession by his appointment as first law officer of the Crown. A brief note from O'Connell to a trusted friend declared that "within an hour he could be Attorney-General." No assurance, however, of even a modified policy, such as Parnell led him to hope for, would be given; and O'Connell, thinking he had been trifled with, renewed his attacks on the Government, and publicly admonished Bishop Doyle against being deluded by viceregal blandishments. The sarcasm was undeserved; but though it wounded the susceptibility of the prelate, it did not warp him from his disinterested course. He still confidentially reiterated his advice to those in power that they should "come to some understanding with O'Connell;"² while Stanley held office this was impossible, for he regarded such an alliance as derogatory to the position of the Government.

A minority in the Cabinet, consisting of Grey, Lansdowne, Richmond, Palmerston, and Melbourne, would have made concessions of importance to secure a measure of moderate reform. They feared the recurrence of outbreaks like those at Nottingham and Bristol, and, still more, ways of organised agitation becoming habitual in England, which in Ireland had proved so formidable. Grey and Palmerston had several communications in November with Harrowby and Wharnccliffe, who were recognised as the spokesmen of a party of compromise supposed to be influential. As long as *pour parler* was devoted to the interchange of regrets at national division, and fears of the subversive tendency of demagoguism, all went well. But, from the first, Melbourne's common sense discerned that they would never be able to agree about details; or, if they did, that one or other of the great parties, now thoroughly roused by conflict, would fly off in a rage from the terms of compromise when clearly placed before them. Matters had not gone very far when the truth of these prognostics appeared. Earl Grey would have risked a good deal to

¹ To Sir H. Parnell, October 17th, 1831.

² Letter to Sir H. Parnell, December 23rd, 1831, MS.

save "his order," which he began to think in jeopardy; but he did not want to throw away his popularity for nothing. Peel had never committed himself broadly or embarrassingly against enfranchisement or disfranchisement, and even the Duke had become a convert to the policy of some change. But neither would endure that the conduct of an affair so all-important should be quietly taken out of their hands by men like the self-appointed mediators; and both refused, consequently, to have anything to do with the negotiation. Disapproval of it spread rapidly on whisper's wing, and when the Premier asked for a list of the peers prepared to take up a neutral position, when the bill a second time should be before the Lords, Wharncliffe was compelled to own that their followers were few.

On the 12th of December Lord J. Russell laid on the table the third edition of the Reform Bill, which left to the freemen their old franchise, adopted the £50 occupation suffrage in counties, and based the disfranchising schedules on a compound ratio of property and population. Some of the more reflecting Conservatives were disposed to acknowledge the conciliatory spirit of these modifications, and would gladly have gone into committee without a division. Sir Robert Peel decided otherwise, knowing that his party in the Upper House remained inexorable, with exception of the fraction who were endeavouring to assume the function and dignity of umpires, and whose secession he felt to be injurious to his authority and influence as leader. He significantly announced that whatever others might do, he would record his opinion on the second reading against the principle of the bill. After two nights' debate, in which Stanley and Macaulay surpassed themselves, 324 voted for the second reading, and but 162 against it.¹ The preponderance was thus increased by thirty votes above the greatest majority of the previous session.

Melbourne complained that Durham, though adverse to the concessions that had helped to secure this result, would, in his exultation, have used it to crush all further opposition. He had all along been outbidding his colleagues in vehemence of language and advocacy of extreme views. Brougham he hated as a supposed rival in the succession to his father-in-law as head of the Liberal party, whose triumphs were not to end, but only to begin at the passing of the Reform Bill. Every day's delay was mere waste of time. The Premier's reluctance to overbear the Lords filled him alternately with pity and rage, and his taunts and goadings from this time became intolerable. At the Cabinet dinner on the 19th of December, wrote Althorp:—

"Durham made the most brutal attack on Lord Grey I ever heard in my life, and I conclude he will certainly resign. He will put this upon alterations in the bill—most unfairly—because there is no alteration of any consequence in the main principle; and I doubt whether he knows anything about the alterations, as he will not allow anybody

¹ The debate closed on Sunday morning, December 18th, 1831.

to tell him what they are. But if he resigns on this ground it will break up the Government.”¹

He did not resign, but continued browbeating the Premier ; and opposing Palmerston, whom he wanted to supplant in the Foreign Office. Melbourne listened with loathing to his tirades ; and on one occasion said, “ If I had been Lord Grey I would have knocked him down.” After Christmas it became a question whether before the bill was sent to the Upper House power should be demanded to make peers. The veteran chief confessed to his trusted lieutenant with what anxiety he regarded such an alternative, which “ he wished to God could be avoided.” “ Melbourne, Richmond, and Palmerston might in consequence resign ; and possibly Lansdowne and Stanley. The Cabinet could not then hold together, and therefore with a view to the eventual success of the measure, it would perhaps be better for them all to make up their minds to resign if again beaten in the Lords.”² Brougham was at this time lying ill at his house in Westmoreland ; and in opinion he seems to have wavered. To have the power in the last resort was become indispensable, if the ministry were to hold together ; and that they should be believed to have it was equally essential to carrying the measure unmutilated through committee in the Commons. When, if ever, it should be exercised, and to what extent, it was premature to determine ; but on the 13th of January a minute was agreed to by the Cabinet, reciting their unanimous opinion that it was necessary for them to have the power of making an addition to the peerage for the purpose of carrying the bill ; and that the expediency of making such an addition depended on his Majesty being prepared to allow them the discretion of carrying it to the full extent it might be necessary to secure the success of the measure. The Home Secretary and the Lord President shared the first minister’s repugnance to the alternative, but it was probably owing in no slight degree to a conviction of their sincerity in this respect, that William IV. was induced to refuse no longer a request so unwelcome. After the rejection of the first bill by the Lords, when the King expressed his desire that ministers should not resign, he stated his belief that no minister could be found to propose a very large creation of peers for the purpose of carrying a new bill, and they certainly had acquiesced in that opinion :—

“ Things in their progress since had forced upon their consideration what was originally thought impossible ; they had been brought gradually to contemplate what once appeared to be an unqualified evil, as an absolute necessity ; and the King, as these discussions proceeded, was brought at last, though most reluctantly, to confide to them the power which they claimed, to be exercised however only in the last extremity, and on certain conditions.”³

Such is the authentic version given at the time by him who was

¹ Althorp to his father, December 20th, 1831.

² Grey to Althorp, January 10th, 1832.

³ Grey to Althorp, March 11th, 1832.

primarily accountable to the Sovereign and the nation for counsels which might have been defeated had they been disclosed. Outsiders were divided between misgivings they forebore to express, and impatient unbelief they did not scruple to avow. Even deferential followers who lay nearest the tent of their reticent chief, longed to penetrate the secret of what he would do in extremity, and when he would believe the decisive hour had come. Week after week Althorp and Russell went on working their bill through committee, discussing every insidious amendment with temper and disposing of it handsomely in division. Honest opponents made no more way in public than the Intermediaries in private negotiation. Popular expectancy was calm ; but if the peers should misconstrue this for slackening zeal in the cause of Reform, what were ministers prepared to do? Melbourne, when pressed to tell, resorted to his favourite method of defence, and parried Charles Greville's questions by bantering exaggeration and ironical appeals for compassion towards the unfortunate possessors of power—at the risk of being set down for a trifler, or registered in confidential note-book as a recusant at heart ready to go over to the enemy. Hobhouse says Lord Howick urged him to call upon his father and tell him his character would be lost if the bill failed, through his irresolution. In a letter to the *Edinburgh Review*,¹ the present Earl Grey confidently affirms from his own knowledge and recollection that his father “never hesitated in creating peers to whatever extent might be necessary ; nor did he ever falter in his determination to fulfil this duty. But he believed it to be of the very highest importance for the future welfare of the nation that the necessity should be averted ; and that if it could not in the end be avoided, it ought to be deferred as long as possible.” But in February there was a prevalent feeling among the colleagues and friends of the Premier that he was deferring the creation of peers too long. His own explanation of his conduct is to be found in a note on his letter to Sir Herbert Taylor, 10th of February, 1832, in which he told his son that he was quite aware “that the loss of the Reform Bill a second time in the House of Lords would be fatal to his character as a public man, and make his whole long political life a failure ; but he must play the game his own way. A premature creation of peers would diminish the chances of success ; and he would not suffer himself to be driven into acting until in his own judgment the proper time was come.” He thought the motive likely to induce Lords Harrowby and Wharncliffe to vote for the second reading was the desire to prevent what they considered the great evil of creating peers to carry it. But were the step now taken this motive would cease to operate, and they would naturally vote against the bill, and might be followed by no small number of peers.

Meanwhile Harrowby and Wharncliffe, with Charles Greville for their plenipotentiary, clung to the fond illusion that their project of

marriage between the party that wanted to go back and the party that wanted to go forward might be realised, and blessed with all the happiness which is proverbially the guerdon of true love. Nobody but the three matchmakers seems to have believed in its feasibility ; all the invitations to take part in the eventful ceremonial were refused ; and again the critical day was deferred. • Nevertheless the busy go-between notes with pensive satisfaction how he and his friends persevered from day to day rebuilding their house of cards and plying Ministers and Opposition chiefs impartially with arguments to prove that theirs was the only plan to save the country. Melbourne's good nature, and probably too his quiet enjoyment of the ridiculous, encouraged the prince of gossips by throwing him every now and then a sympathetic response, which was duly recounted during the day, and recorded at night as a gratifying proof that in his heart he was with them. One Saturday evening about the middle of February, when we may imagine the Home Secretary trying to get through his letters, the Clerk of the Council dropped in to give him an extra lesson on the sinfulness of making peers to carry the bill, not because the bill was bad, or the country indifferent, but because it might prevent him and other sensible men from coalescing hereafter with those who did not approve of it. He describes the Home Secretary as well inclined to assent to all he said, but being "in one of his listening lazy moods, he was disposed to hear everything and say little"¹—alternately thinking, no doubt, his visitor a bore, and that it might after all be worth while learning all he had to tell of what was going on among the waverers and waiters upon providence. Next day Palmerston sent to say that he wanted to see him—a proof how much more alert *he* was in political exigencies, "and more satisfactory to talk to." So down he trotted to the Foreign Office with a list of trimmers in his pocket who were to turn the balance and save the nation. In strict confidence he showed the names, and then, as a fine stroke of diplomacy, permitted Palmerston to say if he chose on his own authority that he had seen the men in ambush, provided he did not mention any of their names : because, "in fact, not one of them had given any authority to be so counted."² We now understand Melbourne's lazy listening mood when set upon by such a negotiator, who, self-appointed, fancied he could talk reformers and anti-reformers into a new settlement of the representation, for sake of which both should give up a good deal. Palmerston accomplished his purpose in sending for him by telling him certain awful secrets, which he knew he would reveal to his frightened friends, about Lord Grey's waxing wroth and being resolved to make peers. Therewith he presented some rough sketches in *chiaro 'scuro* of the "explosion that must inevitably follow,"³ if the bill was thrown out a third time ; a catastrophe they must at any cost prevent. The machinist of impos-

¹ Greville's Journal, February 14th, 1832, p. 254.

² Journal, February 14th, 1832, p. 255. ³ Idem.

sible compromise undertook to dispute the probability of such an event, and commenced reweaving the Wharncliffe web again. Palmerston having charged him to the muzzle with blank cartridge, took all the rest quietly, and bowed him out with the intimation that he would be delighted to see him again. For another month whispered hints and muttered innuendoes continued without abatement. Sometimes Archbishop Howley's indecision stopped the way; fragments of letters from Lord Harrowby set people by the ears till the press began to doubt Lord Grey's fidelity to the £10 franchise; and the "Moderate Party," as that nebulous element was called, entertained hopes that even that might be modified. As time wore on other tales got into circulation: one with respect to the right of voting in counties out of freeholds situated in towns was to be given up; another that Marylebone only, of the metropolitan cities, was to be enfranchised. The Clerk of the Council seriously believed that Lord Harrowby might have extorted this concession in a conference with Lord Grey, but that he "happened to have a headache." No wonder Brougham and Durham grew uneasy, restless, and tormenting; and that Melbourne was worried by their forebodings, which his correct appreciation of the character of the Premier and his Home Office introspection of the state of feeling throughout the country made him regard as groundless.

Still anxious doubt overhung the two ensuing months as to what would happen should the possible exigency arise. The bill passed the Commons, without further change of importance, by a majority of 116; and, unwilling to risk the consequences of its rejection by the Lords, Althorp supported Brougham and Durham in urging a sufficient creation of peers. Out-voted in the Cabinet, he wrote to the Premier that considering all that had happened he thought they were bound to omit nothing necessary to insure the passing of the measure; and that if by their omission it were lost they would never be forgiven by the nation for the calamities that might ensue. Earl Grey could not venture in reply to say with confidence that the Waverers, as they were called, were strong enough to turn the trembling scale.

"The majority against us (in October) was forty-one; the conversions from which we now look forward to a more favourable result on the second reading, would turn against us almost to a man; many of those on whom we now depend would, I believe, certainly leave us; and there is no saying how far a defection to which the natural feeling of the House of Lords would tend might be carried. We should be exposed then to a great risk of failure even on the second reading: . . . and I really believe we should fail. In such a failure you may say our characters would be safe. I doubt it. We should be exposed to attacks of another kind, in which that part of the community which must be regarded as the soundest and the best would probably join. Even the most violent, who have no affection for us, and whose object it is to vilify all public men, and to wean public opinion from the settled institutions of the Government, would cry out against us, for

want of vigour and energy in not having made enough. What then would be the effect in the country? Would the indignation directed against the House of Lords be less after the creation of peers, in the event of another failure, than before it; would not all the dangers which we now apprehend be equally incurred? and can you believe that our characters would save us in the general wreck that would ensue? My belief is the danger of a general combination against the Government would not be less, and that its consequences would be worse. As at present advised, I do not think anything would induce me to be a consenting party to a large creation of peers." ¹

A certain deceptive show of success cheered the fainting hopes of compromise when the bill reached the Lords. Bishop Blomfield stood forth like another Aaron with a rod of peace which promised to devour all the rods of war; he was cheered by a few sensible men on both sides, who above all things recoiled from the prospect of recourse to violent measures; and all the extreme politicians on either side of the Woolsack sulked at the conciliatory tone of the Duke and Lord Grey. Bishop Philpotts scandalised his discreeter brethren in lawn by the vehemence of his antagonism. He was severely handled by Lord Grey, who towards others was mild and conciliatory, conscious that a harsh or threatening word might turn the balance at the last moment. Many wavered during that eventful night. It could hardly be said that Harrowby and Wharncliffe led a compact party of seceders; for they had no design or capability of welding men together for the purpose of separate action; and their chief function lay in supplying a score or two of Conservative peers with plausible reasons for agreeing to go into committee rather than drive matters to extremity. But it is certain that they were unable to devise, much less to show the way of executing, any definite counter-scheme to be worked out by amendments in detail; and it may with truth be said that the Waverers whose votes were to determine the issue on the second reading had no agreement amongst themselves what ought to follow, or how the measure was to be ultimately fashioned. The second reading was carried by a majority of nine. Seventeen of their lordships reversed their previous votes, ten abstained from repeating theirs, and twelve whose former absence signified their indifference to Reform mustered in the ranks of Government to save their order. It was day-dawn on the 14th of April when the memorable result was declared. The sanguine were much elated; but Melbourne said gravely as he quitted the House, "It is not all over yet." ²

The Easter holidays were spent in negotiations between Palmerston, Graham, Stanley, and the Duke of Richmond on one side, and Wharncliffe, Haddington, and Lyndhurst on the other, for the Seceders, as they were called, had rejoined the ranks of Opposition, and wished it to be so understood. The Premier was ready to make more considerable concessions than previously, and Lyndhurst professed himself

¹ To Althorp, March 11th, 1832.

² Hobhouse, vol. ii. p. 230.

anxious to come to an accommodation. He believed, however, that the principle of some reform having been at length settled by a certain amount of Conservative acquiescence, ministers could neither carry Schedule A in the Upper House as then constituted, nor persuade the King to create fifty peers for the purpose ; and if not they must either yield in committee or give place to other men. He proposed therefore to begin by turning the bill upside down, and moving that the disfranchising clauses should be postponed until after the enfranchising clauses had been determined on. The First Minister declared that to this he could not agree. When, therefore, Harrowby and Wharncliffe consented beforehand to vote for it, they knew that they were insuring a defeat of ministers, who would treat it as a vote of want of confidence. No intimation was given nevertheless by them of the course about to be taken until the afternoon of the 7th of May, when the peers were about to go into committee. This reticence, and the consequent surprise to which it led, put an end to further parley. Upon going into committee the Lord Chief Baron proposed to postpone all the disfranchising clauses with a view of enforcing amendments of the other portions of the bill, and virtually hoisting a new standard of Reform inscribed with the motto, "Creation of new rights without extinction of old privileges." Melbourne and Palmerston always said that, had this been proposed by the Tory Cabinet in 1830, it would have been carried in both Houses by three to one, and a decade or two would have elapsed before any serious attempt was made to extinguish nomination boroughs. But it was now too late. Like the rest of his colleagues, the Home Secretary was now prepared to advise a creation of peers rather than throw over Schedule A. Twenty years' experience of elections had naturally led him to appreciate highly the convenience of nomination seats ; and he would sometimes amuse himself and scandalise a Benthamite acquaintance by arguing that if small boroughs were to be kept they would generally be corrupt ; that it was immaterial to the candidate whether he paid two thousand pounds to one owner or to two hundred vendors for the seat ; and that public decency was less infringed in the former case than in the latter. He loved to play with the edged tools of argument, when he talked in private and without reserve. But to turn gossip of this kind into grave declarations of opinion, and to found on them reflections injurious to common sense and personal honour, is wholly without justification. We are asked to believe that at a ball at the Duchess de Dino's, two nights after he had helped to carry the second reading of the Reform Bill, Melbourne strove to convince Mr. Greville, then in the confidence of the Opposition, that the Government could not be carried on without the rotten boroughs ; and that he did not see why the bill ought not to be rejected ! What fragments of interrupted talk, or scraps of irony and sarcasm uttered amid the music and bustle of a crowded assembly, may have tickled the ear of the Clerk of the Council, none can tell ; but the concatenation of such phrases dropped in such a place, at such a time and by such a man,

and the construction put upon them of spontaneous insincerity and wanton treachery to his party, his kindred, and himself, is simply incredible. Lyndhurst's argument for his motion was in effect a declaration against disfranchisement, and in so many words a rejection of the policy three times deliberately adopted within twelve months by the House of Commons. It was carried by a majority of thirty-five, no proxies being available in committee.

In the Chancellor's private room the Premier consulted Holland, Lansdowne, Althorp, and Melbourne; and they were now unanimous that unless peers were created they must resign. The promptitude of acquiescence by the minority who had hitherto deprecated resort to this extreme measure, thus fully indicated their prudence and patriotism. They had persuaded their more eager colleagues to wait until the necessity had been made clear; and thereby exonerated the Cabinet from the responsibility of needlessly wounding the constitution. To have advised the use of the prerogative for the purpose of overbearing the legislative judgment of the peers a day previously, would have exposed them to the imputation of grievous error in calculating the event, which it might always have been said would have gone the other way; or of recklessly humiliating an independent branch of the legislature in their eagerness to secure the success of their bill. No reasonings or protestations could have silenced this reproach. History would have been bound to record how a ministry availed itself of its popularity out of doors to compel an unwilling monarch to infringe the constitution when many of the best and wisest thought there was no actual need of doing so; and the precedent thus established would ever after have been felt to overhang freedom of judgment in the Lords. But neither Melbourne, Lansdowne, nor Grey had ever disputed or doubted that a crisis might come, when to avert revolution the power of making peers might and ought to be exerted. The crisis had now arrived; it had been brought about by their opponents deliberately, and after full warning and discussion; their consciences were therefore free, and without a dissentient voice they bade their chief upon the morrow tell the King that unless the unwise majority of peers should be overborne they could no longer be answerable for the peace and welfare of the country. A minute of the Cabinet, drawn by Palmerston with Melbourne's approval, and signed by all except the Duke of Richmond, recommended an immediate creation of peers. The Premier and the Chancellor were deputed to lay it before the King, and they received from his Majesty a peremptory refusal. Ministers at once resigned. Next day, while hearing a law argument in court, the Chief Baron received a letter from Sir Herbert Taylor, requiring his immediate presence in the royal closet. The incidents that followed are well known: Sir Robert Peel and the Speaker Manners Sutton, successively declined the perilous honour of the Premiership; and after the experiment of a single night's debate, Mr. A. Baring renounced the hopeless attempt of persuading the House of Commons to allow him to bring in a counter Reform Bill.

William IV. was forced to give way; a sufficient number of the Lords at his Majesty's private request withdrew from further opposition; and the bill became law on the 7th of June.

In the struggle which thus ended, the personal popularity of the Sovereign passed away, and thenceforth gave place to feelings of distrust, rather than dislike, among large classes of the community. Queen Adelaide was supposed to have chiefly influenced him in the unfortunate attempt to displace his ministers, regardless of the decided preference shown them by the House of Commons. Angry invectives and coarse lampoons filled the columns of the journals of widest circulation. The Monarch bitterly complained that the authors of these libels were not brought to punishment, and reproached the Home Secretary with not directing the Attorney-General to institute proceedings, as had frequently been done in his brother's reign. Melbourne detested the scurrility of the press, and tried his best to soothe royal susceptibility thus wounded. But he could not, to please the Court, encourage the idea that any good would come of criminal proceedings. He understood too well the futility of such a course, and he was deeply impressed with the conviction that nothing could be more injurious to the interests of monarchy. William IV. listened to his courtly but candid expostulations without being convinced; but he believed in his loyalty and devotion, and continued to repose more confidence in his reliability than in that of any other of his advisers, with the exception of Earl Grey.

Meanwhile, in Ireland, the experiment of government by impartial disregard of all opinions, off-hand snubbings of all suggestions, and the employment of force in repressing all kinds of manifestations, was felt by the Cabinet to be a complete failure. Lord Anglesey pressed for the passing of a Tithe Bill and the redemption of Church lands, the enactment of a poor law and a redistribution of seats in accordance with the altered proportions of population in the three kingdoms since the Union. But Parliament was engrossed with the conflict about the English Reform Bill, and his influence, with his popularity, was gone. Distrust of Stanley characterised his correspondence, which was full of complaints of the ill-usage and ingratitude he had met with from all local factions; and his incessant reiteration of disgust and despair at the position in which he found himself, swayed ministers, no doubt, in neglecting to act upon his recommendations, though it could not justify them in leaving him twelve months longer to be little better than a target whereat conflicting parties fired their insulting pellets, while the country became every day more insubordinate and miserable. No reckless speech in opposition or anonymous invective in the press could depict in darker hues than his own confidential letters the deplorable state of the kingdom of which he was the mis-Governor-General. In February he wrote:—

“The country is at this moment all but in a state of rebellion. I have shown what additional force will be immediately necessary, which I have rather under than overrated; and I conscientiously believe

that if our tithe plan were instantly adopted and acted upon, at the same time that a firm determination were shown to enforce the actual laws whilst they last, bad as they are, the country might yet be saved. If we are to act upon a contrary system, I have no hope. Blake goes over immediately. He is perfectly equal to show the practicability of overcoming all the difficulties put forth by Stanley. Indeed, answers to his objections are already sent over to Lord Grey. In the meantime I tremble at every day's post. I cannot cover the whole country, and can only subdue two or three counties at a time, and then fall upon others. But what a miserable state of things! I really doubt if my presence here can be much longer of use. Personally I have nothing to complain of with ministers. All with whom I communicate are apparently full of kindness and confidence. Still there is something, or somebody, too powerful for me to counteract, and therefore I expect mischief. I will not, however, abandon the sinking vessel."¹

Elsewhere he describes the relation subsisting between himself and his Chief Secretary, who hardly took the trouble to write to him from London, or to impart his views and projects of legislation. Early in the session he warned Stanley that if the various plans for the improvement of the country were vigorously pushed forward, there would be little need of coercion; but if this were not done (and that promptly), then he had no hesitation in saying that his military means were wholly inadequate; and less than an addition of twenty thousand men could not secure the tranquillity of Ireland.² All this, nevertheless, was not done, nor any material part of it. The Marquis stuck to the ship, which lay helplessly rolling in the trough of the sea of troubles, through many a dark night and dreary day. The Home Secretary continued to write frank and genial letters. Holland's, always witty, were always welcome; Althorp's, considerate and kind. But nothing effectual was done in the way of legislation. A few Whigs were given appointments without distinction or power, and Ponsonby was advanced by his relative, the First Lord of the Treasury, to the exceptionally rich see of Derry. Practically the disregard of the law which proclaimed men of all creeds entitled to trust and employment remained unredressed; and disaffection to misrule grew accordingly.

A bill making the composition for tithes compulsory in Ireland was the only general measure of amelioration for which in 1832 Parliament found time, and, like too many others, it came too late. Animosity to the manner of collection was half forgotten in awakened desire to get rid altogether of a charge upon land which, to the Catholic majority, could never cease to be a badge of conquest. The gentry sympathised with the clergy, who were suddenly reduced to absolute want by the refusal of their dues; and the clergy instinctively looked for sympathy and aid to the few wealthy parishioners of their own communion.

¹ Private letter to Lord Cloncurry, February 11th, 1832.

² Letter to Secretary Stanley, February 6th, 1832.

Emancipation remained almost a dead letter, its only effect discernible by the peasantry being a rapid multiplication of evictions, stimulated by the abolition of the forty-shilling franchise. And thus the confluent streams of social and sectarian animosity deepened and widened, till order and law seemed everywhere in danger of being swamped in the flood. Melbourne had early foreseen the deplorable consequences of too long postponing relief from religious disabilities, and the readjustment of the relations between the owners and occupiers of the soil. But while the conflict for Reform lasted no one but Lansdowne, Spring Rice, and Sir H. Parnell had time to give heed to suggestions or effective measures for tranquillising Ireland. The creation of a Board of Works endowed by the Treasury, and the establishment of the system of national education, whose grants in aid of local contribution were furnished from the same imperial source, would in peaceful times have won popular applause, if not gratitude. But in the anarchy of sect and party their effect was inappreciable. The solution of the great disturbing questions was not even attempted. Electoral reform, when England and Scotland had been satisfied, was given to Ireland so grudgingly and with so niggard a hand as to furnish O'Connell with new topics of reproach and upbraiding; and the Tithe Bill of 1832, which if passed three years before might have prevented the guerilla conflicts of Carrickshock and Newtownbarry, was wholly impotent to appease the storm. Lord Anglesey's proposals were in fact overruled at the instance of Stanley, of whom he bitterly complained as thwarting instead of supporting him.

"What a pity (he wrote to Lord Cloncurry) that when there was a scheme worked up by Blake and Griffith, assisted by you, and approved by Lord Plunket and Blackburn, and recommended by me, who was without prejudice and in no respect committed by public declarations or pledges, and had only calmly to listen to the opinions of such able men and then to form my own—what a pity that such a plan should be thrown overboard, and that another of little promise should be substituted."

Melbourne acquiesced doubtfully in a course he felt himself unable to control or guide. Stanley by his courage and eloquence had virtually persuaded Lord Grey to regard him as Home Secretary for Ireland; and there was quite enough in the condition of Great Britain to occupy the attention of the Secretary of State. Melbourne himself, it must be owned, was fascinated by the dauntless energy and unwavering self-reliance of the Irish Secretary, who began to be looked upon by many as the coming man of the party.

Charles Greville notes the substance of his talk with Melbourne on their way to town from Panshanger, where they had been staying.¹ He regretted Lord John's expressions at Torquay about the ballot, which were, he thought, unwarrantable. Brougham, he said, was "tossed about in perpetual caprices, fanciful and sensitive, and actuated

by all sorts of littlenesses, even with regard to people so insignificant that it was difficult to conceive how he could ever think about them." The Irish question seemed to him most difficult to settle. Archbishop Howley was willing to reform the temporalities of the Church, but not to alienate to other uses any portion of its property. He evinced no little uneasiness regarding the state of the country and to this his companion ascribed the desire he expressed to keep Lord Hill and Lord F. Somerset at the Horse Guards. But in truth his opinions on this important subject rested on no transitory apprehension regarding public tranquillity.

A feeling showed itself early in the new House of Commons hostile to the influence and independence of the Horse Guards. Had the Duke of Wellington retained the command-in-chief, which he took after the death of the Duke of York with the approval of the whole nation, no idea of subverting it would have gained ground; but Lord Hill did not possess equal weight as an administrator; both he and his Secretary, Lord Fitzroy Somerset, were regarded as party men, and the insinuation was perpetually reiterated that the patronage of the army was used for party purposes. Lord Hill sometimes voted in consonance with his own opinions as a peer; and sometimes stayed away. This did not escape censure in the press and in Parliament; and for not voting for the Reform Bill, Hume and O'Connell had loudly called for his dismissal. It was even mooted in the Cabinet whether he should not be reprov'd. Melbourne warmly encountered what he deemed an error of executive policy, and his view prevailed. He thought the command of the Army ought to be regarded as a neutral trust, to be exercised without regard to the fluctuating politics of the day. He adhered to the policy of Mr. Pitt in this respect, sanctioned by the unqualified approval of Mr. Fox; both of whom in 1788 desired to sever military patronage from that of the administration, in the hope that thereby more thorough confidence should be created in the minds of the officers as to the impartial judgment of their conduct, and their claims to promotion. Government by party he held to be indispensable to the vitality of parliamentary rule, and the dispensation of civil patronage among the adherents of the party in power for the time being, he always vindicated as a necessary concomitant of party government. But he deprecated earnestly the multiplication of prizes to be battled for on the hustings or in the lobby; and having regard to the position of officers, subject as they were to the summary and absolute authority of those above them, and often to their unaccountable and unreasonable caprice, affecting not only their character but their hopes of advancement, he urged strongly the importance of maintaining the theory and the principle that from the sovereign head of the army down through all its grades to the drummer and recruit there ought to be no recognition of political antecedents or party opinions. This was avowedly the sentiment of the Duke of Wellington, and not the sentiment merely, but the administrative rule which he maintained at the Horse Guards. An

active and intelligent section of Whigs and Radicals began at this time to advocate the opposite principle, insisting that all control and patronage should be vested in the Secretary for War ; who should be held answerable to Parliament for every act of military administration. Sir J. Graham and Mr. Edward Ellice were at all times zealous in their advocacy of this policy, and both pursued its development as a favourite aim, though neither lived to see its consummation. Grey and Palmerston sided with the Home Secretary ; and though they regretted the occasional votes of Lord Hill, they believed him to be an honourable man ; and they resisted all attempts to remove him because he did not happen to belong to Brooks's Club. But Greville, in his love of the piquant and epigrammatic, put together frequently odds and ends of opinion dropped in the carelessness of conversation ; and when he came to jot them down, philosophised about them in a fashion not a little calculated to mislead. "It was curious," he wrote of Melbourne, "to see the working and counter-working of his real opinions and principles with his false position, and the mixture of bluntness, facility and shrewdness, discretion, levity, and seriousness, which, colouring his mind and character by turns, made up the strange compound of his thoughts and actions.¹ How little this kaleidoscopic picture of the man resembled the reality, when, having bid his caricaturist good-morning, he sat down to write confidentially to Bowood, a letter dated the same day enables us correctly to judge :—

"Your letter this morning put me in mind of how ill I have fulfilled my promise, of keeping you informed upon the state of Ireland, but I have been in the habit of sending the papers regularly to Grey, and I do not know that you will not give a better judgment if you read the whole of the information together than you would if you had received it in detail. I therefore send you in a box the most material of the letters which have been received. I have perhaps erred rather in this—of sending too many than too few ; I add also a copy of a letter from Stanley, which contains his views upon many most important and material points. The result of the whole appears to me to be that there is no chance nor thought of any active and determined resistance to the law in Ireland where it is adequately enforced, but it is clear that there is a settled determination not to obey it unless they are compelled to do so. The tithe is paid wherever a military force is shown sufficient to compel the payment, but the barbarous murder at Doneraile and other circumstances show that the animus is as decided as ever, and will not scruple any violence or enormity. The murders, outrages, etc., are dreadful, and will undoubtedly sooner or later compel the adoption of measures stronger than the ordinary law. I have long foreseen this, but such measures must not be prematurely proposed ; you must carry along with you the public feeling and the general conviction. The evil must be so glaring as to be seen even by the blind, and the necessity so certain as to convince not only the

¹ September 28th, 1832.

understanding of the prudent, but the passions of the multitude. I say nothing of foreign affairs, you will hear of them from Palmerston. The decision of the Conference in which he is now engaged is of great importance. From the tone of the Russian Embassy I think they will throw every obstacle in the way of the adoption of coercive measures. But our situation is becoming embarrassing; and the country is getting impatient at it. Grey writes that Althorp and Brougham are indisposed to any step which may lead to war; but at the same time alive to the necessity of fulfilling our engagements. Grey intended to leave Howick on the 4th of October, to call at Castle Howard and to be in town from the 8th to the 10th; but Palmerston thinks that what he and Graham wrote to him yesterday will probably induce him to hasten his journey. In truth, affairs are rather too important for the absence of so many ministers at such distances. Holland is better, but still very bad, and I should fear his recovery would be very slow. She fidgets his life out with anxiety and solicitude and I am convinced adds a fourth to the time in which he otherwise would get well."¹

Melbourne sat to Haydon about this time, who thought him very affable and amiable; he had a fine head, and looked refined and handsome. He asked much about Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Keats and Shelley. The artist thought him a delightful, frank, easy, unaffected man of fashion. He says, "I spoke of Lord Durham's return:—Dead silence. I talked of Birmingham. A sort of hint as to Scholefield and Atwood,—a passing opinion, yet confidential." Melbourne said he knew that Lord North often endeavoured to persuade the King not to continue the American War, but that the virulence of the old King's feelings obliged him; and added that the King patronised West against Reynolds because the latter was so intimate with Fox and Burke. With regard to Art, he was afraid history would never have the patronage which portraiture obtained. Haydon said the Government alone could do it. The minister ejaculated, "How?" "First by a committee of the House, then by vote." Melbourne was afraid selections might be invidious. The painter rejoined that the selected would be more likely to be envied than otherwise. He asked, had not sculptors had every opportunity, and had they generally done as well as they ought? Haydon replied that "they had not. But it was no argument, because one class of artists had acted as manufacturers, that others must do so too." Melbourne: "then we shall see what a popular Parliament will do. If Hume is not against it your scheme may be feasible."²

¹ To Lansdowne, September 28th, 1832, MS.

² Haydon's Diary, October to December, 1832.

CHAPTER XX.

EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE DUTIES.

Coercion Bill—First Factory Act—Mrs. Norton—Home Office patronage—Mr. Disraeli—Viceroyalty of Ireland—Church temporalities.

STANLEY'S brilliant achievements in debate and indefatigable energy in the discharge of the duties of his department won him the reward he coveted—a seat in the Cabinet; and thenceforth the framing of legislative measures and the distribution of Irish patronage were left wholly to him. He had a genuine admiration for Earl Grey, who was older than his father, and to whom from childhood he had been taught to look up. To him he showed a deference and respect which he affected for no other of his colleagues. He had never shown much consideration for the Viceroy's opinions; and not much more for the Chancellor's. The Attorney-General, Blackburn, and the law adviser to the Castle, Mr. (afterwards Baron) Greene, chiefly supplied him with the details of information he wanted, and the forms of legislation he designed. The former was the legitimate successor of Mr. Saurin, with greater versatility and reticence; the latter a timid, hypochondriacal and colourless man, who only required to be wound up once a week to tell punctually on his face at Dublin how the wind blew at Knowsley. Stanley was thenceforth Home Secretary of State for Ireland, and was the absolute ruler of the country. Unfortunately its condition was one of unparalleled provocation to high-handed rigour. Agrarian crime desolated whole counties, and the tithe war raged more fiercely than ever. O'Connell, incensed at finding himself excluded as completely as before the passing of the Reform Act, which he had essentially contributed to carry, from all participation or influence in affairs, gave himself unreservedly to agitation for the repeal of the Union. A few Catholic proprietors held aloof, but they could hardly be said to support the Government; Melbourne, Althorp, and Grant were for prompt and large measures of sectarian conciliation; but Stanley declared that "Ireland must be taught to fear before she could be taught to love;" and the Premier, and those who sympathised in his personal resentments and vexations, induced the Cabinet to adopt the combination of repressive provisions which formed the first important measure submitted to the new Parliament. Althorp, overweighted with the business of the Exchequer and the leadership of the Commons, and who personally knew nothing of Ireland, stammered through a melancholy statement of crime and outrage, which he said could only be quelled by suspending the legal tribunals, by proclaiming martial law, and at the same time prohibiting by proclamation political meetings. But he failed to persuade the new House of Commons, for he had failed to be persuaded himself, that these remedies would be

effectual. In common with half the Liberal party, he believed Stanley to be the truest incarnation of Conservatism in Parliament; and with his known opinions on the Church question, he foresaw insuperable difficulty in the way of compensatory measures of concession, were those of repression once passed. Unconsciously he betrayed how little his heart was in the business; and O'Connell's denunciation of the whole scheme, followed as it was by strong expressions of disapproval from others, rendered it doubtful what the issue might be. Stanley in half an hour changed the whole state of affairs. Lord Russell has described it as the most surprising instance of what intense earnestness, high intellect, reckless courage, and passionate eloquence can achieve in changing the mood of a popular assembly. Melbourne, who sat under the gallery, said afterwards, "he completely brought back the House to the stern purpose from which it had been wandering, by his incomparable mastery of details." O'Connell felt keenly the odium heaped upon him, during this invective, which held him responsible for all the crime and outrage committed in the land, and the result was practically seen when but a score of English members sided with their Irish colleagues in the division. Lord Grey was delighted with his undaunted lieutenant, and Melbourne began to regard him as next in succession to the headship of the Whig party.

Great as was the effect of Stanley's speech upon the division, Melbourne felt that the minority was well worth considering. It was plain that, out of doors, multitudes thought the bill tyrannical; and he would much rather it had been carried without the triumph of declamation than, so to speak, by dint of it. Obligated as he was to hear from day to day every popular whisper and murmur through the Dionysian ear of his department, he could not be unconscious that the resistance offered to the measure found prolonged echoes throughout the great cities and towns. O'Connell felt this also, and was not dismayed; he even boasted in his own bantering way at having scared his opponents by his denunciations; every shop window had his likeness by H. B., stretched upon his back as Gulliver, with Anglesey, Stanley, and Althorp eagerly heading the Lilliputians against him. He was supposed to be exclaiming, "I roared so loud, they all ran away, and some of them were hurt by the fall they got jumping off my side; but they soon came back again."

A long arrear of legislative measures of the practical and unpolitical kind had to be worked off; and it remained to be seen how a reconstructed Parliament would deal with them. Revision of the East India Company's Charter, and its renewal on principles of free trade and free colonisation, engrossed the attention of the Board of Control. Abolition of negro slavery, loudly insisted on by the Liberals when out of power, could no longer be postponed, and the Colonial Department was occupied with the details of a legislative scheme. The Treasury had in hand the important considerations involved in the renewal of the Bank Act; and on the Home Office devolved the preparation of a Factory Bill and a new Poor Law. Up to this time the labour of

children was wholly unprotected by any statute law. Parents and the masters of apprentices might indeed be called to account for neglect or cruelty by anybody who witnessed overt acts of ill-usage so heinous as not to admit of palliation or disproof. But "anybody" practically meant nobody. Liability to the bondage and brutalization of premature toil had gradually become the normal condition of the offspring of the wage-earning classes throughout the manufacturing districts ; and in the quickened pace of competition and stimulated greed of unprecedented gain, the temptations to use up the otherwise unmarketable capabilities of childhood had become irresistible. Melbourne called to mind how Sir Robert Peel, the father of the statesman, had some years before been the first to denounce publicly the spreading evil. A select committee had been appointed at his instance in 1816, which reported important evidence, but made no definite recommendation ; and in 1818 the worthy Baronet brought in a restrictive bill, which had the support of Wilberforce and others who preferred humanity to class interests. At that time the number of hands engaged in spinning and weaving cotton was estimated at sixty thousand ; Sir Robert himself stated that he had one thousand apprentices ; and that he knew the necessity of some legal regulation with respect to that class of persons, which was yearly becoming more numerous. He therefore called on Parliament to interpose for the protection of the defenceless ones, whose chances of health and life were daily sacrificed by employers making haste to be rich at the smallest possible cost in wages. But the old House of Commons cared for none of these things, and the Government of which the great manufacturer's son was a leading member, could not be induced to take up the question. Melbourne had caused inquiries to be made into the actual condition of things in the chief seats of textile industry ; and having obtained a body of authentic evidence which placed the magnitude of the abuse beyond all controversy, he had a bill carefully drawn, which with some difficulty he persuaded the Cabinet to sanction, prohibiting the employment for hire of children under nine years of age in any except silk mills, limiting the time for which children under eleven might be employed to nine hours in the day, and forty-eight hours in the week ; and providing for attendance at school, with a charge of one penny in the shilling out of the earnings of the child, if the employer required it. Medical aid was established, and inspectors appointed to see that the enactment was obeyed.

Such was the first chapter of what has since been extended into a code of laws for the defence of youth against the cupidity of age ; and for the preservation of the moral and material energies of the community from premature exhaustion for the inordinate advantage of a few. The Factory Bill of 1833 encountered sharp opposition in its progress through the legislature. Arguments with which we have since grown familiar, about the right divine of capital to make the most it can of opportunities, and the right divine of parentage to do what it likes with its little ones, were then heard for the first time, from both Radi-

cal and Tory benches ; and the book of lamentations over trade about to be banished, and foreign rivals about to be enriched in consequence of England's sentimental folly, was then opened, and has not yet been closed. But the Home Secretary was not to be moved by deputations of mill-owners who foretold impending ruin, each to their own particular trade, and all to an unhappy country. He told them that he thought the country was not so unhappy ; and (as Macaulay said of the constitution) that it "took a deal of ruining." If the experiment of limiting hours of labour threatened to fail, it could be discontinued ; but he was resolved that it should be tried. One day Mr. Evelyn Denison stopped him at the door of the Home Office when about to mount his horse, to urge certain amendments in the education clauses. He bade him speak to his brother George. "I have been with him," said his friend, "for half an hour, but can make no way ;" and on being asked why, he said complainingly, "he damned me, damned the clauses, and damned the bill." Melbourne, by this time in the saddle, replied gravely, "And damn it, what more could he say ?—but I'll see about it."¹

He had not been long at the Home Office when he received a letter from the granddaughter of Sheridan, who was a near relative of Sir James Graham, asking for her husband, Mr. Norton, some appointment for which he might be considered eligible as a member of the Bar ; and gently pleading, as a claim to consideration, the illustrious memory of him who had once been the idol of the Whigs, but who had unrequited passed away while yet they tarried in the wilderness. Recollections of many a brilliant gathering at Melbourne House were awakened by the name

———of that rare gifted man,
The pride of the senate, the bower, and the hall,
The orator, dramatist, minstrel who ran
Through each mode of the lyre and was master of all.

Nor were the more recent memories of the son, still better known to Melbourne as a contemporary and friend, less calculated to excite his interest. He thought he would answer the letter in person as he passed by Storey's Gate ; and thus began the intimacy destined to exercise no little influence on his subsequent life. George Norton, though next in remainder to his brother Lord Grantley, had but a slender income ; and possessing neither talent nor industry to win advancement at the Bar, thought he might better his income through the influence of his wife's family and connections. She was then but five-and-twenty ; possessing hereditary charms of wit and beauty, and

¹ A well-known critic of the first edition undertook to correct the version of the anecdote thus given by averring that the measure in controversy was the memorable New Poor Law, and that the joke turned on the Under-Secretary's damning the "paupers." But unfortunately for this version George Lamb had ceased from profane swearing in January, 1834, and the much-contested Poor Law Amendment Bill was not brought in until the 17th of April following.

having made good already high pretensions to celebrity in criticism and verse. From the hours devoted to her children and to her literary pursuits, society insisted upon stealing not a few, to pay her homage. With her sisters Lady Seymour and Mrs. Blackwood she "was everywhere;" and everywhere men of mark and distinction sought her recognition. A Secretary of State was now among the number: and finding in her society attraction and sympathy which he had neither at home nor in the crowd, he was too glad to be received after a while on the easy footing of an old acquaintance, and soon of a valued friend. A vacancy in the Divisional Magistracy of London enabled him to confer on Mr. Norton the sort of place which he desired. The work was not laborious, and the salary, though not large, was enough to add materially to the comforts of the unpretentious household. He professed himself grateful, and did not disguise that he was hopeful of greater benefits to come. He was ever warm in the welcome of his patron, and obsequious in deference to each passing whim. Only one thing he would not do—attend punctually at his court. Murmurs on the subject reached Melbourne, and he was vexed. He heard also of disputes between the magistrates, which if made public would be, he thought, unseemly, and tried remonstrance in the way that he supposed least likely to offend.

"T. W., as you say, does what he has not the least right to do; and the worst is, he is not only foolish himself, but is the cause of folly in others. I had the greatest difficulty in preventing Norton from replying to him in the *Times*. I was much alarmed at the notion of his doing this, especially as I found him thoroughly impressed with the opinion that he could do it with great cleverness and dexterity. I hate the magistrates writing to the newspapers; besides people will be sure to say to me,—if the magistrates get squabbling in public, why do you not clear the bench of these fellows altogether? They tell me also that Norton does not go to his office early enough. I should be annoyed at having a complaint made on this subject. Pray dissuade him, gently, from any public exhibitions in the newspapers; and urge him gently to a little more activity in the morning. He might surely without difficulty get there by twelve o'clock. This is a disagreeable lecturing letter, but still upon matters to which it is necessary to pay some attention."¹

With exceptional colleagues like Mr. Walker, the author of 'The Original,' and Mr. Hardwicke, both of them men of attainments and accomplishments, Mr. Norton contrived to get on better; and when a vacancy subsequently occurred on the Whitechapel bench, "he seemed to think that he and H. had almost the right to make the appointment, and that everything was to give way to the consideration of giving him a pleasant companion. He said the bench used, with Walker, to be like a pleasant club, and that he must have an agreeable fellow to walk to and fro with."² Melbourne soon discerned, however,

¹ To the Hon. Mrs. Norton, July 19th, 1831.

² January 27th, 1836.
18

how selfish and unyielding was the temper of the man; and how unsympathetic was his nature with that of his wife. The greater portion of their income was the fruit of her literary toil, and she could not always conceal her disappointment and chagrin at his insensibility to the continued self-denial it entailed. She was for some time the editor of a well-known monthly journal, and afterwards of 'The Keepsake.' And Melbourne, who took daily more interest in her indefatigable exertions, was ever ready with the suggestion and advice his fine scholarship and unfailing memory enabled him, without reference or research, to supply. In weariness of the bickering and spite of party politics, he was glad to spend an hour without ceremony or notice in society so engaging. He was for years a frequent visitor at Storey's Gate, and there made the acquaintance of Mr. R. B. Sheridan and his brothers, of Albany Fonblanque, who became one of his warmest and most unwavering adherents; and, as chance would have it, of a man then but rising into note, who was destined to fill as high a place in the world's history as himself.

To celebrate her younger brother's birthday, Mrs. Norton asked to dinner the other members of her family who were in town, two of her husband's colleagues in the magistracy, Lord Melbourne, and the author of 'Vivian Grey,' in whom she had recently discovered the son of her father's intimate friend.¹ Young Disraeli was not long returned from his travels in the East, with traits of which he had interested her on the occasion of their first acquaintance. He had just then been defeated in an attempt to get into Parliament for the borough of Wycombe, where he attributed his failure to want of support by the Whigs. Mrs. Norton presented him after dinner to the Home Secretary, who had the power, she said, of retrieving the disappointment if he chose; and whose frank and open manner led to a long conversation, in which Mr. Disraeli mentioned the circumstances of his late discomfiture, dwelling on each particular with the emphasis which every young man of ambition since Parliament was invented is sure to lay upon the broken promises and scandalous behaviour of his victorious foes. The minister was attracted more and more as he listened to the uncommonplace language and spirit of the youthful politician, and thought to himself he would be well worth serving. Abruptly, but with a certain tone of kindness which took away any air of assumption, he said, "Well now, tell me,—what do you want to be?" The quiet gravity of the reply fairly took him aback—"I

¹ In rash assertion of his crazy claim to exclusive omniscience in contemporary anecdote, doubts were cast by Mr. Hayward on the accuracy of the narrative thus given. The only survivors of the scene were asked to say without reserve how far the recital deviated from their recollections of what had occurred. Mrs. Norton confirmed in every particular the fidelity of the statement, and Lord Beaconsfield did not suggest that a phrase should be altered. He also dwelt on the critic's incredulity regarding the early intimacy of his father with Mr. Thomas Sheridan, proofs of which, in characteristic correspondence, still exist at Frampton Court.—*Letter to the writer from Lord Beaconsfield and R. Brinsley Sheridan,*

want to be Prime Minister." Melbourne gave a long sigh, and then said very seriously :

"No chance of that in our time. It is all arranged and settled. Nobody but Lord Grey could perhaps have carried the Reform Bill ; but he is an old man, and when he gives up, he will certainly be succeeded by one who has every requisite for the position, in the prime of life and fame, of old blood, high rank, great fortune, and greater ability. Once in power, there is nothing to prevent him holding office as long as Sir Robert Walpole. Nobody can compete with Stanley. I heard him the other night in the Commons, when the party were all divided and breaking away from their ranks, recall them by the mere force of superior will and eloquence : he rose like a young eagle above them all, and kept hovering over their heads till they were reduced to abject submission. There is nothing like him. If you are going into politics and mean to stick to it, I dare say you will do very well, for you have ability and enterprise ; and if you are careful how you steer, no doubt you will get into some port at last. But you must put all these foolish notions out of your head ; they won't do at all. Stanley will be the next Prime Minister, you will see."

How both would have started, had their sybil-like hostess unfolded there and then in prophetic dream the fate in store for each ; for the one, that before many months, and for the other after the lapse of five-and-thirty years,—that he should be Prime Minister of England.

His son, though unable to enjoy the sports or share the adventures of youth, was more than ever an object of his solicitude and care. As he grew to man's estate he had improved in person, and in features might be called handsome. He was not without intelligence ; amused himself with reading, and occasionally with cards and music. In manner he was affable, and usually gentle in disposition, seldom evincing waywardness or excitability. His father spent some portion of every day with him, and exhausted every artifice of affection to beguile his loneliness and to devise occupations having a tendency to waken him from the apathy of his condition. But the distressing malady to which he was abnormally a victim refused to yield to any kind of treatment, and, though for many years its destructive influence was not generally observable in his bodily frame, it gradually exerted its debilitating sway over the faculties of his mind. The physicians forbade his being left for any time alone, and his father was frequently harassed with apprehension lest he should suffer from the inattention of his attendants. "I have often," said Mrs. Norton, "seen Lord Melbourne, at his own house, pause in the middle of conversation and remain for some moments listening for some sound from the adjoining room, where he had left the invalid, as if he dreaded his being alone." The world knew or recked not this long protracted trial of his feelings ; but that it weighed upon his spirit and wore the fibre of his mental elasticity, who can doubt ?

On Lord Anglesey's resignation in consequence of ill-health, the Premier proposed that Melbourne should succeed him in the Viceroy-

alty of Ireland ; and, strange to say, he did not at first refuse. He was weary of the routine drudgery of the Home Office, and the irrepressible versatility and loquacity of the Chancellor left him almost nothing to do in the House of Lords. The excitement of the Reform struggle was over : and after three years' Secretaryship of State he began to feel bored. Ireland was still the difficulty of the Government, and he fancied that he would find in the duties of its administration objects of more interest, if not more usefulness, than those which demanded his attention at Whitehall. To those who knew his ways and peculiarities, and whom observation qualified to judge of the requirements of such a post, it might well seem doubtful whether he would have suited it, or it would have suited him. His frankness and love of humour would hardly have had free play in the mimic pageantry of a court whose provincialism craved the pompous ; and he who had laughed so often at the magnificent airs of his old chief at the Castle, "the conqueror of Seringapatam," would have felt himself ineffably ridiculous in the part of mummer sovereign, with his friend Lady Morgan for Mistress of the Robes. His sister, Lady Cowper, from whom he had few political thoughts apart, looked incredulous when told that there was a notion of what she called banishing him to Dublin. He did not always agree with her in opinion, but he knew her affection for him, and had the highest estimate of her sagacity and discernment. He was rather pleased at the offer being made, but after a day or two he made up his mind that he would rather not go. It was not easy to find any one fit to send who would take it ; but upon the whole it was finally resolved to reappoint Lord Wellesley. Recollections of his former difficulties, while holding the office in a period of intense political excitement, were doubtless present to his mind, and the difference of circumstances was in many ways disheartening. O'Connell's power and influence were greatly increased, and the able adviser whom he had then to lean upon, though still a member of the Government, could not, as Chancellor, be referred to on all occasions as he had been when Attorney-General. Lord Wellesley liked to be considered capable of devising an original policy and possessing a superior courage requisite for carrying it into effect ; and it has been conjectured, not unreasonably, that through Mr. A. B. Blake, O'Connell was again sounded as to the views he entertained with respect to office. The great agitator was in the eyes of the noble Marquis simply an obstacle to be effectually put out of his way if possible. He looked upon him very much as he had looked upon the Peishwa as head of the Mahrattas, whom he was quite willing to take into pay if he desired it, or, if he refused, to reduce to submission. He was profoundly persuaded of his own superiority to the rest of mankind, and of the obligations he owed to fame as a type of transcendent magnanimity, not to suffer personal prejudice to divert him from his purpose, or to cherish resentment for abuse and ridicule as Lord Grey was apt to do. Had he been able to persuade O'Connell to give up Repeal for the office of chief adviser of the Crown in Ireland,

Lord Wellesley would not have shrunk from telling the Cabinet that his first act would be a master-stroke against which he would listen to no objections ; and if he had not got his way he would not have hesitated to throw up his office, as more than once in his lifetime he had done before. It is of course quite possible that he only thought aloud upon the subject in the presence of his old confidant, and had not fully made up his mind as to what he would do ; while an eager and intriguing politician like Blake, who delighted in mysterious hints and specious innuendoes, could not refrain from making the most of a suggestion to O'Connell, and giving him to understand that all would speedily be settled if he chose. A sincere Catholic and politically a disciple of the school of Burke and Grenville, Blake abhorred the democratic tendencies of agitation, and would readily have made any exertion or sacrifice to loyalise his fellow-countrymen upon the basis of social and sectarian equality. In a word, he was anxious in 1833 for the great experiment in Irish administration which actually was tried two years later. But opinion was not yet ripe ; for the present the design fell to the ground ; and except within a very limited circle, nothing at the time was further known to have been contemplated. Lady Wellesley was a devout Catholic ; and Archbishop Murray became a more frequent guest at the Phoenix Park, as did Lord Killeen. But neither exercised much political influence over the great body of those who belonged to their communion.

A remarkable discussion arose in the Lords on the Irish Church Temporalities Bill, which struck off ten bishoprics from that establishment, and vested the superfluities of episcopal and capitular endowments in commissioners for the bettering of poorer brethren. The measure was Stanley's *chef d'œuvre* in Ireland by alternately humiliating the rival creeds. Twenty years before it might have materially strengthened the Protestant Establishment, and possibly contributed to prolong its existence. Even in 1833 the equity and reasonableness of its provisions reflected a certain degree of credit on its contrivers ; but it was treated by Oxford and Lambeth as the first serious breach in the outworks of national establishment, and while stimulating the development of the counter-movement afterwards known as Tractarianism, it evoked thunders of denunciation in the General Assembly of Scotland and the "no popery" meetings at Exeter Hall. Haydon, who troubled his head as little as most men with ecclesiastical apprehensions, went to hear the debate in the Lords. Nor was his curiosity disappointed :—

"In the Irish Church debate the Duke spoke well, without hesitation, enforcing what he said with a bend of his head, striking his hand forcibly, and as if convinced, on the papers. He finished, and to my utter astonishment, up starts Melbourne like an artillery rocket. He began in a fury. His language flowed out like fire ; he made such palpable hits that he floored the Duke as if he had shot him. But the moment the stimulus was over, his habitual apathy got ahead ; he stammered, hummed, and hawed. It was the most pictorial exhibi-

tion of the night. He waved his white hand with the natural grace of Talma, expanded his broad chest, looked right at his adversary like a handsome lion, and grappled him with the grace of Paris."

Resistance throughout the metropolis was organised, during the autumn, to the payment of the window tax. Meetings were held, at some of which Colonel Evans took part, in Westminster; and the collectors hesitated to enforce payment by distress. This was just the sort of case in which the Home Secretary's firmness and decision served to prevent mischievous consequences, which might have readily become wide-spread; but he writes about the matter as quietly as if it were the correction of a clerical error in a turnpike bill:—

"I certainly agree with you in all you say, and I hope the matter now stands better than it did. There was some bungling on Thursday in consequence of the Board of Taxes not having had sufficient communication with the sheriffs themselves; but as soon as I heard of it I sent for the latter officers and told them that I looked to them to execute the law, which was accordingly done on Saturday morning, as you will have seen in the newspapers. The effect has been good, and I understand, now, there is a general disposition to pay in the regular course. Meetings, however, still continue, and Colonel Evans does all he can to prevent matters from subsiding, but I have every hope that they will do so in spite of him. There never was such a strange fancy as the Chancellor had got into his head, about proroguing the Parliament before the day to which it stands prorogued at present. However, we have beat him out of it, and everything will go on in the regular course."¹

His manner of dealing with deputations had sometimes the appearance of levity or whim. His mood was variable; and he indulged now and then in an affectation of ignorance or indifference shocking to Utilitarians who mistook it for reality, and grievous to sub-officials who knew it to be but wayward make-believe. His pranks at these interviews were deemed of more consequence than he supposed. To seem absorbed in blowing a feather or nursing a sofa-cushion when giving audience about capital punishment, or receiving a report on Criminal Law Reform, in preparation for debate, was, according to Miss Martineau, a "moral offence." Sydney Smith, with a juster discrimination, tried to quiz him out of what he felt to be a fault.

"Our Viscount is somewhat of an impostor. Instead of being the ignorant man he pretends to be, before he meets the deputation of tallow chandlers in the morning, he sits up half the night talking with — about melting and skimming, and then, although he has acquired knowledge enough to work off a whole vat of prime Leicestershire tallow, he pretends next morning not to know the difference between a dip and a mould. I moreover believe him to be conscientiously alive to the good or evil that he is doing, but if you had no mind to put or be put to, the sooner you get out of his way the better."

¹ To Lord Lansdowne; Home Office, October 29th, 1833.

When the Commissioners of Poor Inquiry in Ireland were appointed, Archbishop Whately asked for a secretary qualified to aid in organising an efficient staff, and free from the prejudices likely to embarrass them in the performance of their difficult task. Mr. Senior being consulted, named Mr. Revans, who had distinguished himself in a subordinate capacity under the English Commission, and who had thereby become known to the Home Secretary. As usual, however, in questions of Irish patronage, the claims of others, on the ground of Parliamentary influence, were strongly pressed, and the Prelate learned with vexation that an individual whom he considered far less fitted for the post, was likely to be appointed. He wrote saying that if they did not nominate Mr. Revans, or some one equally colourless in Irish and capable in English eyes, he must decline to act. Two days after, the secretary was summoned to the Home Office. "You must be off to Ireland," said Melbourne, as soon as he entered the room. "I have no wish to go," was the rejoinder; but if the Government require it, I will only ask that my position may not be worsened by the transfer." "Certainly not," said the minister; "but talk to Tom Young on the subject, and I will see that the right thing is done. Lose no time about it, as they are waiting for you; and let me hear how you get on." After some weeks spent in Dublin, Mr. Revans was recalled to London to assist in winding-up the affairs of the English inquiry, and he asked for an interview, to report progress, at Whitehall. On seeing him, Melbourne began with "Well, what sort of team have you got?" "The wary official," writes Haydon, "hesitated, and said he was not quite sure that he understood the question. "How do the two archbishops pull together?" "As well as possible," was the reply; "I only hope we may find no difficulty greater than with them."

The scene at the Lord Mayor's dinner was exquisite; the mischievous air of over-politeness with which Lord Brougham handed in the Lady Mayoress; the arch looks of Lord Melbourne; the supercilious sneer of Lord Stanley at a City affair, as he calls it. In the ball-room I said to Lord Stanley, Lord Melbourne enjoys it. There is nothing Lord Melbourne does not enjoy, said he. Can there be a finer epitaph on a man? It is true of Lord Melbourne, who is all amiability, good-humour, and simplicity of mind."¹

His duties in the House of Lords were manifold and onerous. As having the charge of Government bills originating in that House or sent up from the Commons, he had to master not only the subject of each, but to make himself acquainted with the multifarious details they included, and to give reasons for resisting the changes which an astute and angry Opposition were incessantly attempting to make in them. Grey, Holland, and Plunket dealt ably and eloquently with general principles, on the second reading of the greater measures of the day, and Lansdowne was alike ready to aid in this and in the

¹ 9th Nov. 1833. Haydon's 'Memoirs,' vol. ii. p. 383-4.

practical labours of committee. The irrepressible Chancellor took his full share, and something more, of work as well as talk; but to the circumspect and practical Home Secretary his provoking and exaggerative way was sometimes less a help than a hindrance. He had less scruple about compromise than any of his colleagues, when suggested by himself; but he did more than all of them to make compromise difficult by his taunts and jeers at the expense of opponents. Melbourne's uppermost thought, when bringing in or taking up a bill, was so to engineer it as to expose the fewest possible points of attack to his vigilant and out-numbering foes; and for this purpose he often said but little, and refused to be drawn out of his trenches by the most tempting or affronting show of attack. Brougham, on the contrary, was ready to fight any number of duels, rhetorical or conversational, of black-letter law or black-mouthed insinuation, upon any conceivable occasion: and this, in committee, where he could speak any number of times, tried Melbourne's temper sorely. If, he thought, he could only be tethered to the Woolsack for the grand affair of baiting on the second and third reading, and let them get through the clauses, deliberately it would not so much matter: but this was a division of labour to which the noble and learned economist would not by any means agree. At length it came to be tacitly understood that if an amendment was to be peaceably carried it must be arranged with the Home Secretary. Lord Grey's confidence in his judgment and tact left him a wide discretion; and he was able, by his personal influence, to accomplish much that the reporters did not notice at the time; and of which no record is to be found in Hansard. He had, besides, a great variety of business thrown upon him, in preparing the answers to questions to be given by the Premier or by himself, and in dealing with petitions, diversified and often difficult in their character. His laconic method of previous inquiry for these occasions, is indicated in a note to the Secretary of the Treasury.

"HOME OFFICE, *March 20th*, 1834.

"MY DEAR RICE,—

"When Lord Dundonald received a pardon under the Great Seal, was the fine which had been imposed upon him not repaid to him? I wish to know this because Mr. Butt has given Lord Wynford a petition to the House of Lords, in which he alleges this to be the fact, and prays the same for himself.

"Yours faithfully."

At the Spring Assizes, 1834, six agricultural labourers were found guilty at Dorchester of belonging to an association bound together by unlawful oaths, and sentenced to transportation for seven years. Surprise and indignation filled the minds of the whole body of trades unionists throughout the kingdom at the severity of the sentence, and with one voice they publicly denounced its execution as unjust. It being resolved that the men should be transported, their immediate removal was thought necessary as the most effectual way to extinguish

wild hopes, if not dangerous projects of rescue ; they were accordingly sent on board with as little delay as possible, and it was announced that the ship had sailed for Sydney. This was regarded as an aggravation of the injustice ; and at public meetings all through the country Government were denounced as the enemies of the working classes. This was what came, it was bitterly said, of accepting a measure of reform which enfranchised the whole of the middle ranks of life, but left without electoral power the great bulk of those who lived by wage labour. A new movement must be organised to redress the inequality of political privileges ; and Robert Owen and others added, to secure an equality of the benefits and blessings of wealth. In the metropolis the influence of these ideas spread rapidly. Owen lectured, argued, wrote, and talked himself hoarse in dissemination of his fixed idea of mutual support as the one all-sufficient remedy for the ills of life ; and being a thoroughly earnest and disinterested man, he made such way that even those who regarded his doctrines as fatuous and dangerous were compelled to acknowledge his devoted sincerity. To multitudes out of work, or half-starving themselves in the desperate conflict of strikes, his word seemed a message of social glad tidings, the like of which had never been heard before ; and when to pecuniary loss and domestic privation there was added the sting of political wrong, the words of the theorists were caught up and reiterated with ever-increasing fervour and force, till they threatened to become like the breath of the whirlwind. The council of the National Trades Union, whose affiliated branches were said to contain from three to four hundred thousand men, published a manifesto embodying the salient principles of Owenism, and enjoining practical measures for their realisation. The governing classes were denounced as idlers, and the trading classes as profit-mongers who added nothing to the common stock of the community, but like their betters, lived upon the fruits of productive labour.

“ The best means of enabling the working classes themselves to be consumers of the necessities, commodities, and luxuries of life, as well as producers of them, was by forming arrangements to prevent the profits of their toil from going out of the circle of the productive classes into that of the unproductive. To this end each trade society must open shops for dealing with each other and profitably employing their unemployed ; no unionist to lay out his money at any other places than these for all the articles they could supply. Let the baker's union, in the first instance, open shops where all unionists could be supplied with bread or have it baked for them. Butchers' shops, gardeners, cheesemongers, and other provision dealers, tailors, shoemakers, and other trades, should do the same. By these means the producers of real wealth would be enabled to keep the greater part of the circulating medium in their own hands, and thereby become what the political economists have often tauntingly told them to become, capitalists ; and, consequently, they might then give what directions to industry they should think proper, and no longer be

forced to be slavish suppliants to the upper classes for leave to toil at what prices they should choose to offer. Besides, the useful classes would become what they ought to be, a distinct people from the idle and useless. Without these arrangements any strike for higher wages would be fruitless ; for if the labourers got higher wages they would have to pay a higher price for all they consumed, and they might become losers by higher prices, as the aristocracy would most likely fly to other countries for a supply of those articles which they now got in England. The adoption of this plan would force the shopocracy into other and more useful occupations, and to cry for a reduction of taxation.

By way of being practical, the manifesto bade each and every member of the union refuse to aid in manufacturing any article of clothing or equipment for the army or police. In order to make a signal beginning in the complete change of society on which their organisation was determined, they summoned all the unions in and around London to meet on the 21st of April in White Conduit Fields, thence to march to the Home Office to present, through the Secretary of State, a petition to the King for the immediate recall of the Dorsetshire labourers.

Owen, who heartily abhorred all thoughts of violence and disorder, became uneasy at the feverish symptoms of the excitement he had helped so much to create ; and, in his simplicity, wrote to Melbourne, inclosing a copy of the petition, and asking if he would receive deputies from the assembled trades on the appointed day. The minister replied that he would present any memorial reasonably framed, praying for a mitigation of what was felt to be a hardship, if sent to him without menace, ostensible or implied ; but that from a multitude threatening to overawe the Executive by an array of numbers he would receive nothing. He would be at his office from ten till five o'clock on Monday, and would see them if they came in a peaceful and proper manner. Owen communicated this answer to the council of trades, and prevailed on them to name five of their body whose temper and discretion might be relied on to take charge of the petition ; but he strove in vain to dissuade them from accompanying the deputies to Whitehall. Thither the procession must go ; its numbers would appal the heart of power ; and when it was known they were coming in their might, the officials would not dare to remain at their posts and say them nay. Such being the state of affairs, it became the duty of the Home Secretary to provide for the preservation of public tranquillity. Circulars were addressed to the magistrates desiring them to be on the alert, and directing them to swear in large bodies of special constables in every parish to take charge for the day in their various localities, the police being necessarily concentrated at different points near the projected route. The Guards and other troops received orders to be in readiness whenever called upon, but they were on no account to quit their barracks unless specially required. In the course of Saturday the 19th, notices were issued by

the divisional magistrates at the instance of the Home Office to all manufacturers and employers of labour against the dangers of tumult, and recommending them to keep their apprentices at home. All Sunday the town was full of anxiety; Melbourne spent many hours at Whitehall communicating with the various persons in subordinate authority, and endeavouring to impress them all with his own spirit of confidence, that if they only kept their heads cool and refused to be provoked into impatience or ill-humour all would pass off without harm.

From daybreak on the 21st crowds began to assemble at White Conduit House, a tavern which then stood on the rising ground not very far from King's Cross, in the centre of a number of open fields, now no longer recognisable, having been for many years densely covered with buildings. By degrees the Unions appeared with their flags and bands, every man in his best attire and wearing the insignia of his trade. When all were assembled, their numbers were estimated from twenty-five to thirty thousand. And as the procession wound its slow length through the streets, the last contingent had not quitted the rendezvous when the head of the column emerged at Charing Cross. The sentries at the Horse Guards and Home Office had been called in for the day, the gates leading into the Park were shut, and not a soldier or constable was to be seen in the neighbourhood of Whitehall. As the cavalcade moved on towards Westminster, Owen and the deputies, accompanied by Dr. Wade, who acted as a sort of chaplain to the association, and appeared in cassock, gown and bands, presented themselves as had been arranged, and asked for an interview with the Secretary of State. Melbourne, who had made a point of being seen at one of the front windows, whence he quietly observed the procession, sent the Under-Secretary, Mr. Philips, to say that he would not receive them, representing as they did a demonstration of physical force meant to overawe the Government; that he had seen a copy of the petition, and did not quarrel with its language; and if that petition were presented on another day and in a becoming manner, he would receive it, and would himself lay it before the King. Melbourne had desired him to add, that he would always be ready to present to His Majesty any petition respectfully worded and delivered to him in a proper manner.

At Kennington they awaited the answer of the deputation charged with the presentation of the petition to the Home Office. The reply was delivered to them by their secretary, Mr. Brown, in these terms:—

“Brothers, Lord Melbourne’s answer is that he would not receive it in the way it had been presented: but his lordship has condescended to say, that if presented with proper decorum he will himself present it to his Majesty. And now, brothers, it is the order of the Council that you all return promptly and in good order to your several lodges, there to discuss our future proceedings.”

Without any expression of feeling, the Unions then separated and

marched off on their return to their respective districts.¹ "The conduct of the Government throughout the affair was both courageous and humane, though not without an extra-judicial air."²

The most important measure of 1834 was the New Poor Law, which wrought, as it was designed to do, little less than a revolution in the habits and ideas of the agricultural community, and drew down on those by whom it was carried a weight of obloquy which it is hardly possible for a subsequent generation to comprehend. Its chief provisions were foreshadowed in the reports of a Commission of Inquiry of the preceding year, in which the most prominent thinkers and writers were Mr. Senior and Mr. Chadwick. The abuses and anomalies which had grown up under the allowance system had long required treatment with a vigorous hand; but the difficulty of the social questions involved, and the unpopularity certain to be provoked by any comprehensive scheme for checking the demoralising practice of indiscriminating relief, had deterred previous administrations from attempting the ungrateful task. Brougham and Althorp it is generally understood were the chief advocates in council for making the attempt. To them must be ascribed the resolve to issue a Commission of Inquiry; and the subsequent persuasion of the Cabinet to embody in legislative form the stringent remedies which the Commission advised. As a Home Office Bill, it would naturally have been introduced by the Minister of the Interior, had he been a member of the House of Commons. But its details had been mainly elaborated under the auspices of the Keeper of the Great Seal and the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and by the latter it was brought in on the 17th of April in a speech of great length and great lucidity. Sir Robert Peel and most of the country gentlemen around him cordially supported its provisions; and with some unessential modifications in committee it passed the Lower House by great majorities. Melbourne willingly complied with the Chancellor's desire to take charge of the measure in the Lords, while the Duke of Wellington gave it a hearty support. In both Houses, nevertheless, humane and thoughtful men pleaded earnestly against some of its more rigorous enactments; and their objections were vehemently enforced by many influential organs of public opinion; above all by the *Times*. The editor, Mr. Barnes, expressed from the outset his aversion from the principles of overruling centralism, refusal of outdoor relief to the able-bodied, and the separation of husband and wife, parent and child, which formed the leading features of the remedial law; and for several years the hardships said to be inseparable from the austere application of these principles formed the theme of the most eloquent contributions to the pages of the great journal. Melbourne had no cordial liking for the bill. Practically he knew little or nothing of the old system of poor relief. His intuitive good sense led him to appreciate the force of the

¹ *Examiner*, April 27th, 1834.

² 'History of the Half Century,' by W. Wilks, chap. iv. p. 253.

economic objections urged against its continuance ; but his lenient and generous nature recoiled from the stern enforcement of novel rules, for which the habits of the most ignorant and helpless classes of the community were wholly unprepared. He acquiesced in the Cabinet because something effectual and thorough must be done to arrest the downward tendency of an outworn system ; and because he knew not what else to propose. But he discerned more clearly than others the consequence to his party of thus making themselves the legislative protectors of the wealthy and well-to-do, at the apparent cost of those who live by labour. He shrugged his shoulders as he perfunctorily said "content," and muttered to himself something which had very much the sound of profane swearing.

Upon another question, of engrossing interest, which was brought to issue in the session of 1834, his views likewise differed materially from those of his leading colleagues. In their eyes the agitation for the Repeal of the Union was a mere factious and foolish outcry, incited by one man to promote his selfish aims, and to gratify his personal spleen. At any cost he was to be put down. That done, disaffection to imperial rule and disturbance of social tranquillity would disappear ; and Ireland, with a uniform coinage, mileage, and postage, would thenceforth become an undistinguishable part and parcel of an incorporate realm. Melbourne's sagacity led him to look deeper into things ; and while regarding the proposal to call an independent Parliament in Dublin as delusive, and the threat of separation as chimerical, he ascribed the demand to general discontent, sectarian and political, on the part of the Catholic community, for which there was too much cause. Taken literally, he called Repeal damned nonsense ; but the organised agitation which used it as a watch-word seemed to him a grave reproach to Imperial Government at the end of thirty years. He did not believe that it was the mere reverberation of one stentorian voice, or that it would cease from troubling if that voice were mute. O'Connell, on the 23rd of April, against his own shrewder judgment, consented to bring forward a motion for a committee to inquire into the means by which the Union had been carried, and the effects it had produced. After a week's debate, but 37, out of 105 Irish, and but one out of 553 English and Scotch members could be induced to vote for the motion. A joint address to the King pledged both Houses to maintain inviolate the Union as settled in 1800 ; and a tombstone was thereby supposed to be laid on Irish disaffection. But at Holland House there was no such vain illusion. The warning words of Fox, when his rival was carrying, by equally great majorities, his bill for the union of the three kingdoms, were not forgotten there ; and Melbourne's experience of departmental administration served but to confirm his conviction that until equal laws and privileges should be made operative, without regard to creed or race, unity of empire there would never be. He thought if he had power that thus he would shape his policy : but of the possession of such power he did not dream.

CHAPTER XXI.

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, JULY, 1834.

Secession of Stanley and Graham—Mitigated Coercion Bill—Resignation of Earl Grey—Designs of coalition—Melbourne Premier—Policy of conciliation.

WITH the overwhelming majority of the 30th of April against a dissolution of the Union, the triumphs of the Grey administration came to an end. They had been many and signal, the firstfruits of an influence almost unbounded which had been won by the achievement of Reform, and the exercise of which seemed to be irresistible, while those who mainly contributed to that achievement held together. But the time had come when this cohesion was to cease, and the power it gave to melt away. In home, foreign, and colonial affairs the policy of the Government had been reconstructive and successful ; in those of Ireland alone it was unfortunately sterile and abortive, because vainly antagonistic to popular feeling. The best men in and out of office grew sick and ashamed of the plight in which Ireland lay ; and although, without exception, they helped to swell the majority against Repeal, they made up their minds thenceforth to break with the policy of mere resistance, and if the edifice of empire was to be maintained that its western bulwarks should, without more waste of time, be underpinned with broad and solid corner-stones of justice. Catholic Emancipation must no longer be an empty name and mocking unreality. Church property, which had been taken by force from its native owners and conferred by force on the conquering sect, who formed but a tenth of the community, must be subjected at least to contribution for the general purposes of education ; and the scandal must cease of collecting tithes by the aid of Constabulary and Dragoons ; while public meetings to protest and petition were interdicted by law.

Althorp, who sympathised at heart with a growing desire of his supporters for a remedial change of policy, told the Cabinet that he could not resist successfully in debate the reappropriation of surplus ecclesiastical funds ; and Russell told the House of Commons that, in or out of place, he should vote for the adoption of that principle. Stanley, Graham, Richmond and Ripon held the title of the Anglican establishment to all Church property in Ireland to be indefeasible ; and failing to enforce their view in council, on the 27th of May, resigned. Their places were filled up by the promotion of Spring Rice, Lord Auckland, the Marquis Conyngham, and Poulett Thomson. The administration, thus modified, held together for a few weeks longer ; but on the question involved in the renewal of the Coercion Act it was doomed to founder. Althorp and four of his colleagues were for abating materially the exceptional rigour of its enactments. Mr.

Littleton had privately told O'Connell that the Viceroy and he were for omitting the political clauses, and that the bill would be brought in without them; whereupon the Repeal candidate for Wexford was induced to withdraw in favour of the Whig; and an address to the Radicals of England denouncing the Prime Minister, which was actually in type, was withheld by O'Connell. Meanwhile the unaltered act was brought before the Cabinet by the Premier, who cited a despatch of Lord Wellesley declaring it to be indispensable. But a subsequent letter from him, undertaking to govern Ireland without the clauses against political assemblages in the renewed Coercion Act, was received on the 23rd of June.¹ When this was read in the Cabinet, Lord John observed that it looked like an answer to a question, rather than the spontaneous offer of the Viceroy. And so it turned out, Brougham being the author of the suggested change. The oft-tried patience of the veteran chief on this discovery gave way. He said afterwards with warmth, that had he been a younger man, he would have turned out the Chancellor and gone on as he might very well have done; but at seventy he did not feel himself equal to the effort or prepared for the consequences of such a step. While he still hesitated, the disclosure by O'Connell of the facts communicated to him by Mr. Littleton led to Lord Althorp's resignation, and Grey sent it with his own to the King. At a meeting of the Cabinet next day, the outgoing Premier handed Melbourne a sealed letter, of which he had undertaken to be the bearer from his Majesty, requiring his immediate attendance, and advice on the existing state of affairs.² No one was more surprised than the Home Secretary, who neither anticipated nor approved of the change, and who, after he had accepted the command to reconstitute the administration, doubted seriously whether it was possible for him to do so, and whether, for his own sake, it was desirable that he should even try. All his habitual love of leisure, and hatred of trouble about things that did not interest him, strove to beguile him from the task. He was past the prime of life, his home was desolate, and his consolations lay in books and the companionship of those he liked; to gossip with witty women and clever men whom he did not suspect of having any hidden purpose in their talk, was his chief delight. Versatile and whimsical in the drift of his own thoughts, it bored him to be obliged to think or talk in a groove. He had no object of personal, family, or party ambition to make it worth his while. As to a thing inevitable, he had assented to the Reform Bill; and, once in for it, had gallantly and loyally helped to carry it through; but he had never affected enthusiasm at its success, and he did not disguise his aversion from further projects of organic change. With this disposition, and having had the highest compliment paid him by the Sovereign, the question which he asked himself, and to which he got no intelligible answer:

¹ It is given, from an authentic copy made by Lord Wellesley's private secretary, in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1871, p. 299.

² Earl Russell's 'Recollections.'

was—what was he to gain by taking the reins, where his only skill must be shown in slackening speed going down hill? Several times he thought he had made up his mind to have nothing to do with it; but he had not.

Whatever his anticipations may have been, there can be no doubt of the intention of the King, which was that he should seek to form a coalition with the Duke of Wellington. On the 9th of July a paper containing the royal views and desires, in the handwriting of Sir Herbert Taylor, was given to Melbourne by his Majesty. It did little more than reiterate the arguments already urged by William IV. for endeavouring to form a coalition strong enough to resist further legislative change; but in the critical position in which he was placed, a night's reflection satisfied the new minister that duty and policy alike required of him a prompt and explicit reply. In the afternoon of the 10th he transmitted therefore the following answer, which was awaited anxiously at the palace:—

“WHITEHALL, *July 10th, 1834.*

“Viscount Melbourne presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and feels secure that your Majesty will not doubt that Viscount Melbourne has considered the memorandum which your Majesty was graciously pleased to place in his hands yesterday with that attention which its importance demands, and with that solicitude which must be excited in every mind by the present very critical position of public affairs. Viscount Melbourne cannot be otherwise than deeply sensible of the confidence which your Majesty reposes in him upon the present occasion, and of the too flattering terms in which the expression of that confidence is conveyed: and it is further his duty to acknowledge with gratitude the very clear and distinct manner in which your Majesty has condescended to put Viscount Melbourne in possession of the patriotic sentiments by which your Majesty is actuated, and of the enlarged views which your Majesty takes of the state and condition of the country. It appears to Viscount Melbourne to be very natural that, considering the difficulties and dangers from conflicting interests and opinions to which your Majesty's Government has been continually exposed, it should suggest itself to your Majesty's mind that it would be very desirable to avoid these perpetually recurring inconveniences and perils by an union in the service of the State of all those who stand at the head and represent the respective parties in the country: and Viscount Melbourne is anxious to bear his humble testimony to that part of your Majesty's communication which states that, happily your Majesty can take this course without doing violence to any feeling. Viscount Melbourne is sincerely of opinion that no Sovereign has ever shown himself more superior to prejudice, either personal or political, or more prepared to assent both to measures and arrangements, according as they should appear most conducive to the welfare and security of the country. With these views your Majesty calls upon Viscount Melbourne ‘to enter into communication with the

leading individuals of parties, and to endeavour at this crisis to prevail upon them to afford their aid and co-operation towards the formation of an Administration upon an enlarged basis combining the services of the most able and efficient members of each, and your Majesty further desires that Viscount Melbourne will communicate with the Duke of Wellington, with Sir Robert Peel, with Mr. Stanley, and with others of their respective parties, as well as with those who have hitherto acted with himself and have otherwise supported the administration, and that he will endeavour to bring them together, and to establish a community of purpose.' Your Majesty is graciously pleased to add, that 'you do not disguise from yourself the difficulty of the task which your Majesty is desirous of imposing on Viscount Melbourne, nor the objections which Viscount Melbourne may possibly feel to take an active part in the endeavour to carry it into effect, but your Majesty trusts Viscount Melbourne will not refuse to become your confidential agent upon this critical occasion.' Viscount Melbourne would indeed be greatly grieved, if he did not venture to hope that your Majesty is convinced of his devotion to your Majesty's person and service. He would be the most ungrateful of men, if for the sake of a master from whom, whilst he has had the honour to serve him, he has met with nothing but kindness and confidence, he were not prepared to make every exertion, and to run every risk provided a probable prospect were opened of promoting in the result the tranquillity of your Majesty's reign, and advancing the honour and interests of the Crown. It is therefore with great concern that, after a careful deliberation upon your Majesty's communication, Viscount Melbourne feels himself compelled to declare that the difficulty which your Majesty anticipates appears to Viscount Melbourne to be insurmountable, and that the objections to Viscount Melbourne's personally undertaking the task are so great as to render the successful termination of such an attempt utterly hopeless. The distinguished individuals enumerated by your Majesty, the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, and Mr. Stanley, have all and each of them recently expressed not only general want of confidence in your Majesty's Government, but the strongest objections, founded upon principle, to measures of great importance either introduced into Parliament, or adopted by virtue of your Majesty's prerogative : to the bill for the better collection of tithes in Ireland, and to the commission for an inquiry into the state of religion in that country. Both these measures, particularly the last, Viscount Melbourne considers vital and essential in the present state of public feeling and opinion. Would it be then fair in Viscount Melbourne to offer to these distinguished individuals the appearance of a negotiation in which Viscount Melbourne would have everything to demand and nothing to concede? In his audience of your Majesty yesterday, Viscount Melbourne ventured to lay before your Majesty some of those general objections, which press forcibly upon his mind, to Unions and coalitions of opposing parties. Viscount Melbourne will not repeat them now, further than to say that

these objections appear to him to acquire additional strength and weight from the political temper and character of the present times. Viscount Melbourne, however, is most ready to admit that all general rules must be subject to exceptions arising from peculiar circumstances, and that there never was a moment which more imperiously required that men should not suffer themselves to be bound and shackled by preconceived opinions, but should act in that which appears to be the best mode of meeting the exigency of the immediate crisis. Viscount Melbourne again deeply laments the necessity which compels him to return to your Majesty's communication an answer which he fears will be unsatisfactory. Viscount Melbourne has no personal dislikes or objections; on the contrary, for all the individuals in question he entertains great respect, and for one of them, Mr. Stanley, with whom he has more intimate acquaintance, warm affection; but he does not perceive any ground upon which they can be brought together at present, nor any chance of such an accommodation as would be consistent with their own avowed principles, and satisfactory to the country."

There is no room to doubt that expectations had been held out by the Court to the leaders of Opposition that they would be invited to take part in the new arrangements; and it was said and believed by many that it was specially with this view the Home Secretary had been called on to undertake the task of forming an Administration. In the first impulse of disappointment, William IV. directed Melbourne to send a copy of his letter to the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, and Mr. Stanley. To his Grace he wrote accordingly:—

"(*Secret*)

"WHITEHALL, *July 11th*, 1834.

"MY LORD DUKE,—His Majesty, upon accepting the resignation of Earl Grey and Viscount Althorp on the 8th inst., commanded me to attend him at St. James's on the next day, the 9th, at half-past one, p.m., and in the audience with which his Majesty was then pleased to honour me, his Majesty made a communication of his wishes and opinions with respect to the formation of a Ministry. To this communication I thought it my duty to return the reply of which the inclosed is a copy. I have this morning been directed by his Majesty to send this document to your Grace, as well as to Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Stanley, for the purpose of putting your Grace and those gentlemen in possession of his Majesty's feelings and opinions upon the present position of public affairs. The tenour and substance of my letter to his Majesty renders it almost unnecessary for me to add, that I wrote this communication solely in obedience to his Majesty's commands, and I have the honour to remain, etc."

The Duke on the evening of the same day replied:—

"LONDON, *July 11th*, 1834.

"MY LORD,—I have had the honour of receiving your Lordship's letter

of this day, together with the copy of the communication from your Lordship to the King which his Majesty desired should be sent to me. I beg that your Lordship will convey to his Majesty my grateful acknowledgments for his most gracious consideration. I do not understand that it is his Majesty's wish or intention that I should make any observations upon the paper sent to me by your Lordship."

Meanwhile Althorp at a private audience told the King that Grant, Abercromby, Ellice, Spring Rice, and himself were of opinion that the contested clauses in the Coercion Bill should be omitted. This was with a view to obtain permission to disclose the names of the minority in the Cabinet to the House of Commons. Spring Rice told Lord Lansdowne that he much regretted the communication and the use that was intended to be made of it:—"He believed the reason Althorp mentioned names was a generous one; he thought his course would be a popular one, and he wished to include others in the same category with himself. This was just the reason why he should have preferred not to be so included. But the communication having been made, and concurrence given by his Majesty, there was no help for it. At night he received a very extraordinary letter from Brougham, charging him individually with the responsibility of destroying all their chances for the future. He replied that there was no effort which he was not ready and willing to make to avert the peril thus foreboded; but that without Althorp the best efforts to carry measures would be unavailing, as the House of Commons would run wild, and could not be retamed. He fully believed that all was broken up that till then existed; and that the commission given to Melbourne was to open a negotiation for a coalition of parties which at Lord Grey's on Sunday night seemed to be considered as inexpedient and impracticable. The King in his letter had spoken of a Government that should protect the country from the collision of parties. Even if Althorp were to continue Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Grey first minister, after what had happened and what had been disclosed, the clauses of the Coercion Bill respecting meetings were as much out of the question as if they had been already negatived. If the choice were between the bill with the clauses or no bill, he would assuredly vote for the bill; but other people in the House of Commons would not do so: and under any circumstances the success of the clauses was wholly out of the question, even if recommended by Althorp himself. John Russell proposed as an alternative the abandonment of the bill itself—a mode of meeting one danger by encountering a less one, but one not free from responsibility, too rash except under a Government of a strong and popular character. He had endeavoured to warn Littleton. Folly, indiscretion, want of candour, etc., had grievously injured the Government.

To die for treason is a common evil,
But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.

When they parted at Berkeley Square he considered the adminis-

tration at an end, and that they all only held *ad interim*; this only meaning the break-up of the Cabinet as then constituted, not as interfering with any effort which Melbourne might make at rebuilding a new edifice. After the House, he walked for an hour with Lord John, who strongly urged the duty and necessity which should be felt by all to save the country from the double danger of a Tory Cabinet that could not stand, and of a Radical movement that might be fatal, and he added that he had recommended Melbourne to communicate with Grant, Abercromby, and himself. He replied that he would willingly meet Melbourne, and had remained in full expectation that he would desire to see him, but this had not been the case up to the time he was writing.”¹

The intended interview took place the following day, when Melbourne asked Rice to retain the Colonial Department. But the letter derives additional value from the fact that when written, they previously had not met, all that it foreshadowed and advised being adopted by Melbourne, about whose elevation to the first place in the party, torn as it was by distracted counsels, there would seem to have tacitly been thorough accord. He had served with the Duke and Sir Robert Peel in 1828, and for both he felt personally much esteem; but his experience of coalition had not been favourable even when majorities in Parliament could be made up by negotiation with a certain number of borough-owners; and now that the old machinery had been swept away, he did not believe in the possibility of carrying on the Government by any combination of mere executive skill or talent in debate. The ten-pound franchise was not yet two years old, and the sanguine hopes entertained out of doors of what the Liberal majority would accomplish, though damped by late events, were not extinguished. Theoretic scruple would not at any time have deterred him from combining with old associates whose constitutional opinions differed from his own less in substance than in name; and now that six of the leading members of the Cabinet of 1830 were gone he might have more easily been led to entertain the project of re-uniting in council the colleagues of Canning. But with characteristic candour he told the Sovereign that as matters then stood the thing was impossible; and to his most intimate adherents he expressed great unwillingness to undertake the onerous duty on any terms. That he was gratified at having had the offer admits not of a doubt. But four years of office had served to disenchant him with the privilege of being pelted with applications for places and worried about innumerable details in which he felt no interest. He could not be unconscious of his inferiority to Lord Grey in public estimation; and to have the appearance of being his nominee was not flattering to his self-esteem. If the hints and whispers of his well-known familiar Tom Young are to be believed, it needed many adjurations and remonstrances to keep him up to the mark² in the period of uncertainty which followed his first refusal of the

¹ Private and confidential. T. S. Rice to Lord Lansdowne, July 10th, 1834.

² Greville's Diary.

royal offer. The truth is probably that then, as frequently before and after, his mind swayed to and fro between antagonistic impulses which he was too proud and too careless to conceal. He had great difficulty in persuading Althorp to resume the Exchequer, and this he deemed indispensable.

In the course of conversation on the 14th of July, Melbourne said little, but implied in various ways that he could do nothing unless Althorp resumed his position at the Treasury and in the Commons. In fact, he said, laughing, "it seems that Althorp is the Tortoise on which the world now rests."¹ Melbourne remained in consultation with Althorp at Downing Street for some hours. At six o'clock the latter rose in his place, and, stating that the King had directed Lord Melbourne to form an Administration, moved the adjournment of the House. At ten o'clock the same evening the Cabinet were summoned to decide on what was to be done.²

On Monday, the 14th of July, Lord Haddington, in the Peers, asked if a Government had yet been formed. Melbourne replied that he had by command of the Sovereign undertaken to form an Administration; and that when his task was completed he should fully acquaint the House. No one could be more conscious than himself of his inadequacy to fill the responsible position to which he had been unexpectedly called; and nothing but a sense of the gratitude and duty he owed the Sovereign could have induced him to make the attempt in a crisis so difficult. Without the assistance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the sanction of the late First Lord of the Treasury, he should not have ventured to do so; but with their support he felt bound to offer his humble service and counsel to the King, in order that a Government might be formed capable of conducting efficiently the affairs of the country. At length all was settled, and on the 16th of July he kissed hands as First Lord of the Treasury.

The new Cabinet consisted of—

Viscount Melbourne . . .	<i>First Lord of the Treasury.</i>
Marquis of Lansdowne . .	<i>Lord President.</i>
Earl of Mulgrave . . .	<i>Privy Seal.</i>
Lord Brougham . . .	<i>Chancellor.</i>
Viscount Althorp . . .	<i>Chancellor of the Exchequer.</i>
Lord Duncannon . . .	<i>Home Secretary.</i>
Viscount Palmerston . .	<i>Foreign Affairs.</i>
Mr. Spring Rice. . .	<i>Colonial Secretary.</i>
Mr. C. Grant . . .	<i>India Board.</i>
Earl of Auckland . . .	<i>First Lord of the Admiralty.</i>
Lord J. Russell . . .	<i>Paymaster of the Forces.</i>
Lord Holland. . .	<i>Duchy of Lancaster.</i>
Mr. Poulett Thompson .	<i>Board of Trade.</i>
Viscount Howick . . .	<i>Secretary at War.</i>
Mr. Abercromby . . .	<i>Master of the Mint.</i>
Sir. J. C. Hobhouse . .	<i>Woods and Forests.</i>

¹ Littleton to Wellesley, 14th July, 1834, MS. ² To Wellesley, 14th July, 1834, MS.

Out of the Cabinet were—

Marquis Wellesley . . .	<i>Viceroy of Ireland.</i>
Mr. Littleton . . .	<i>Chief Secretary.</i>
Duke of Devonshire . .	<i>Lord Chamberlain.</i>
Duke of Argyll . . .	<i>Lord Steward.</i>
Marquis Conyngham . .	<i>Postmaster-General.</i>
Sir J. Kemp . . .	<i>Master-General of the Ordnance.</i>
Mr. Cutlar Fergusson .	<i>Judge Advocate.</i>
Mr. F. Baring } . .	<i>Secretaries of the Treasury.</i>
Mr. C. Wood }	

Brougham, who had never been able though always eager to assume the position of ministerial leader in the House of Lords, exulted in the retirement of Earl Grey. He regarded himself thenceforth as head of the Administration ; and with a view to impress that idea on the public, before anything was finally settled, volunteered the patriotic announcement from the Woolsack that he had not resigned ; and that his sense of duty would not allow him to forsake his country or his King. His audience were more amused than amazed ; whereupon he lectured their “ laughing lordships ” on their ignorance of the cares of office and their want of belief in the predominant wish of a Lord Chancellor to be relieved of the burthen ; whereat the peers laughed again. Next day, when matters seemed to be settled, he gave out that he might have been Premier himself if he liked, but that he thought it better “ Lamb should be at the Treasury ; ” and in point of fact that he had placed him there. He could not, indeed, persuade the press to take precisely this view ; and when Melbourne with his quiet nonchalant air entered the House to take his seat as First Minister, he could not affect unconsciousness at the cordial greeting he received from troops of personal friends of all shades of opinion, including many who marvelled at his unlooked-for promotion, and some who doubted if he were not too indolent for the place. The Conservatives were well aware that he had declined to make their chiefs an offer of coalition ; and as affairs then looked it was difficult to conceive how else they were likely to return to power. But if a Whig Cabinet there must be, he was undoubtedly the man whom, of all others, they were glad to see at its head. It was only six years since he and Palmerston and Grant had served with them in office without contention or jar : the day might possibly come when some of their party would sit along with them again. The day did come, but not till after Melbourne had passed away.

Had the House of Commons been called on to decide who should be Premier, Althorp beyond doubt would have been named. It was not because of his popularity, though that was unrivalled ; nor because of his equanimity, though that was habitually unruffled ; it was not for his skill in finance, for he had made more than one egregious error ; and as a debater he had neither fluency, eloquence, nor wit. His hold upon the confidence of those he led came of quite other qualities, un-

fortunately rare in political life ; but of inestimable value in the leader of an anxious and often perplexed assembly. What he said he often said imperfectly, but everybody felt that he meant what he said, without juggle, finesse, or reserve ; and that in forming as in expressing his judgment on every question, he was thinking of the subject, not of himself—of the public interest, not of his own. Of all the men in the Government, he was the only one who was believed to be sincerely anxious to quit office, and he was therefore the one of all others whom nobody wished to go. Melbourne, who knew his worth *intus et in cute*, made his resumption of the leadership an essential condition of his own acceptance of the first place at the Treasury ; and the delay which arose in readjusting the administration was in part, at least, attributable to his extreme reluctance to remain. Whatever ambition he may have had was long since satisfied, and with the exception of the Ballot all the great measures had been carried with the advocacy of which he had been identified while in opposition. The wear and tear of the last three years and a half had begun to tell upon his health ; he had literally no personal motive to continue ; and he would gladly have resumed the position of an independent member, in which he believed he could still serve his party. Over and over again, therefore, he refused ; and it was only on being convinced that his obduracy meant loss of power and dignity by all the friends about whose feelings he cared, that he was induced to yield. Here is how the odds for the Premiership were counted from afar.

Macaulay had left England early in the spring, and reaching India at the commencement of the hot weather, had accompanied the Governor-General to Ootacamund, whence he wrote his impressions frankly to his old friend Spring Rice :—

“Many thanks for the kindness of the expressions in your letter. I was indeed truly sorry to leave England without shaking you by the hand. But after all, partings are sad things, and I had quite as many of them to go through as I could well stand. What shall I find you when I come back? Whatever you choose : that is my firm opinion. The game is in your own hands, and if you are not Prime Minister, or very near it, when I return—which will be, I hope, before the end of 1839—I shall say that you have played the game ill. I am too far from the scene of action to offer any opinion or particular decision on the details of the parliamentary warfare. But I think that I can judge pretty well, even in the midst of this wilderness, of the great political operations which are going on in England. And my judgment is this. The strongest party beyond all comparison in the empire is what I call the *Centre Gauche*, the party which goes farther than the majority of the present ministry, and yet stops short of the lengths to which Hume and Warburton go. That party is a match for all the other parties in the State together. It contains, I imagine, three-fourths of the constituent body. But it has no head. Lord Althorp with Stanley’s abilities, or Stanley with Lord Althorp’s opinions and temper, would be the leader of that party, and consequently the most powerful man

in the country. But Stanley's opinions are aristocratical, and his manners unpopular. Lord Althorp's talents are not eminent; and either of them may any day be translated to the House of Lords. I see no man among the Whigs so well qualified as yourself, by talents for business and talents for debate combined, to lead the House of Commons—or in other words, to rule the empire. Stick to the *Centre Gauche*. Gain their confidence, and you may do what you please. This is the game that I would have tried, if I had remained in England. It is a game which you can play, and which nobody now in the House of Commons can play but yourself. I am quite with you about the pensions. Indeed, I think that to touch the pensions already granted would be downright robbery. But I own that the way in which you are dealing with the other great questions before you makes me very uneasy. Why must O'Connell have the credit of originating an amendment of a part of our jurisprudence so unpopular and so absurd as the libel law? And this when, to my certain knowledge, the Attorney-General had strongly pressed on the Cabinet the expediency of doing something on that subject. Why was Lord John Russell suffered to bring in so miserable, so contemptible a measure as the bill for dissenters' marriages? I have been laughing over it with Lord William Bentinck, and, familiar as we are with the wretched and unworkmanlike legislation of India, we both agreed that it was the worst constructed law that we ever fell in with. If now and then you can steal a little time from parliamentary business and official business, write me a few lines, I shall be delighted to receive them, and above all delighted if they tell me that you and your family are well."¹

Surprise was manifested on the announcement that Lord Duncannon was to be Home Secretary, and to be called up to the Peers. He would have been content to remain at the Woods and Forests, an office whose duties he liked, and which left him time enough for those he still more relished, connected with the management of party matters. Melbourne did not care about the taunt of adversaries, that one of his first acts was to make his brother-in-law Secretary of State; but in the then condition of the kingdom, he was anxious to be assured that from day to day he should really know everything of moment that took place, and that, without the formation of any new tie or the making of any new stipulation, there should be a safe and honourable medium of communication with the popular party in Ireland. The personal confidence of O'Connell in the good will, good sense, and good faith of Lord Duncannon was of old standing. They sometimes quarrelled about Irish affairs, but always made it up again, neither professing to be over-borne by the other. All seemed now settled.

"Melbourne laid before the King in writing the substance of what had been agreed upon in Cabinet the previous evening. "He seemed to approve much of Duncannon—not so much of Hobhouse, particularly of his being in the Cabinet. But upon the whole he seemed

¹ From Ootacamund, August 11th, 1834, MS.

inclined to agree. He took the paper, and said he would send an answer without delay. He seemed a good deal agitated and annoyed.”¹

The new Premier announced that it was not meant to proceed further with the Coercion Bill ; but that another measure, omitting the clauses against political meetings, with which the Viceroy had undertaken to dispense, would be forthwith introduced. Without this modification of policy it would have been impossible to reconstitute the Government ; and he had not thought it right on that account to leave his Majesty without a Cabinet. But if assemblages should again in Ireland menace the peace of the realm, ministers would at any inconvenience call Parliament together and ask for power that might be needful to maintain the authority of the Crown.

At the levée Sir J. Campbell noticed that the Chancellor was much disturbed in aspect, and asked Melbourne the reason :—

“Have you not,” he said, “seen this morning’s *Times* ? Another *Broughamic*, hinting that he is out of his mind, exaggerating his peculiarities, vilipending his rhetoric, and above all, asserting that there are heavy and increasing arrears in the Court of Chancery. He takes these attacks most seriously to heart, and I may really say that they drive him mad. I am very uneasy about him, and I am very glad that the session is so near its end.”

But if his colleagues would not give Brougham the lead, he was determined at all events to run ahead. A select committee of the Commons was still inquiring into taxes on newspapers, and he offered to give evidence before them. Lord Althorp had resisted the abolition of the duties on newspaper stamps and advertisements, on the ground that the revenue could not afford it, and the new Premier felt bound to sustain his views. All the more tempting was the opportunity to give judicial testimony in favour of the change. Attended by his train-bearer and mace-bearer, the Chancellor appeared in all the glory of his gold-embroidered robes before the committee, who rose to receive him, and uncovered while he continued to wear his cocked-hat in assertion of his privilege. Mr. Hume was of course delighted with the Caledonian courage thus displayed ; and Spring Rice, who though no longer at the Treasury was watchful about making both ends meet, complained bitterly of the unfairness of this sort of outbidding. But Melbourne felt that he had quite enough on his hands without calling the Lord Keeper to account for what could not now be undone. There was little chance, he knew, of a hostile vote on the question in either House ; and if in the following session the popularity-hunting Chancellor had to acquiesce in retaining the duties he called iniquitous that was his affair. Another erratic proceeding in the same quarter was a suggestion to meet O’Connell halfway regarding the law of libel. Notwithstanding all that had happened in February and the super-erogatory aid he had given to baffle the measure, he now proposed to

¹ To Lansdowne, July 15th, 1834, MS.

give up the *ex-officio* power of filing criminal informations, on behalf of the Crown. Sir J. Campbell complained to Althorp and Russell, but they bade him take comfort, as nothing material would come of such eccentricities. The climax was his suddenly laying on the table a bill to amend the jurisdiction of the House of Lords in the hearing of appeals and writs of error, the important details of which he subsequently undertook to expound in Committee, but no part of which he had ever submitted to the Cabinet. It is even said that at the time they had not been drawn, and certain it is that they were never printed. The prorogation took place the following day, and as the Parliament was not destined ever to meet again, the audacious liberty thus taken with his colleagues, in whose collective name he had presented the dummy, passed without notice. But such things were not unobserved or forgotten by the new Premier. Nor did the *Times* allow them to be forgotten by the people. For fifteen years the great journal had stood by Brougham unwaveringly; but, vexed by the unyielding rigour of his economic theories in support of the new poor law, and scandalised at his inconsistency and indecorum, it at length gave him up, declaring that, "Lord Melbourne would soon find him out, as the honest men of the community were an over-match for the knaves."¹ Reviewing his course during the session, it said that for some months he had been "under morbid excitement, seldom evinced by those of his Majesty's subjects who are suffered to remain masters of their own actions."²

The egregious airs of ascendancy which the Chancellor assumed could not but attract notice. H. B. amusingly depicted the position in a sketch of the "Wolf and the Lamb," in which the former had placed himself a little higher up the stream, while the latter, undisturbed by his presence, watched him quietly from the opposite bank. Equally diverting was an illustration from Sterne, with an apology for making free with the species of the bewildered maiden's pet; and which represented Brougham, in the character of Maria, in pensive attitude and with drooping locks, fondling not a goat, but a woolly wearer of the blue ribbon. Melbourne laughed heartily at these and other harmless jests upon his name; but the King showed daily more vexation at the delusion being kept up in the popular mind that the Chancellor whom he detested was his chief councillor. Entire misconception of how he really stood with his Majesty can alone account for the rhetorical pranks played soon afterwards in Scotland by the Keeper of the Great Seal.

Parliament rose on the 9th of August; the Court remained at Windsor; the Chancellor set out on his memorable Gilpin ride through Scotland; the President of the Council went to Paris; Sir Robert Peel went to study high art in Italy; O'Connell gat him unto his mountain home in Kerry; White's and the Travellers' and every other well-bred club after its kind went grouse or partridge shooting.

¹ The *Times*, July 25th, 1834.

² Ibid, August 19th.

The new Premier stayed in or near town, with the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to keep him company. In the discharge of his new functions of general oversight in the working of administration, he thought it high time to investigate how the commission of inquiry into the state of the destitute poor in Ireland was going on. The assistant commissioners had been named, half of them English and half Irish, with little regard apparently for antecedents or qualifications. Exceptions there were, of whom the most notable was Mr. G. C. Lewis, then entering upon the career in which he eventually gained such eminence. For some months little progress was made. Mr. Revans induced the board to recommend the appointment of several new Assistant Commissioners, of whom the author of this work was one, and the supercession of those who had proved inefficient. The authorities at the Castle demurred, and the board deputed their Secretary to carry their appeal to Whitehall. Duncannon, who understood thoroughly the difficulties of the case, after an interview with Mr. More O'Ferrall, undertook to obtain the Premier's sanction for the changes required; and by the beginning of September the local examinations in every part of Ireland were commenced, by which a body of evidence was collected that rendered it impossible any longer to refuse the enactment of a legal provision for the destitute in the poorest of the three kingdoms.

An error of inadvertence by one of the clerks in the Home Office regarding the names of two gentlemen who desired to be included in the Revised Royal Commission of inquiry nearly led to a disagreement that would have almost inevitably caused a break-up of the Government. It is no use moralising on the insignificance of the grit that wounds and blinds the natural eye: as useless would it be to interpolate apologetic platitudes between the provoking incidents of such an affair. Better let the individual most concerned tell the story in his own way. A letter from the Marquis Lansdowne of the 3rd of September expressed strongly his surprise that the reconstituted Commission of inquiry had been issued without the names of Mr. Bicheno and Sir Charles Grey, both of whom he had been promised should be included. Melbourne at once replied:—

"I was as much surprised as you or the gentlemen themselves could be at the omission of the names. They were sent to me upon a slip of paper, and I gave them in at the office, to whom exactly I do not remember, and desired that they might be inserted in the Commission. I apprehend that in the hurry of that time the slip of paper was lost, and as I had left the office before the issuing of the second Commission, I had not an opportunity of detecting the omission before it received the sign-manual. It can now be only remedied by a new Commission, about which I will write to Duncannon immediately."¹

A few days later he forwarded the answer he had received from the Home Office, adding—

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, September 4th, 1834, MS.

"It certainly would be very awkward to issue a third Commission, and there are no other means of remedying the error. It is quite unprecedented to insert names in such a Commission after it has received the sign-manual. Pray think of this, and try whether you cannot manage the matter with these gentlemen."¹

This characteristic bit of common sense seemed to his friend rather too cool; and the Lord President, thoroughly vexed with his colleague, said he was weary of office, and that he wished to retire; but he did so without a word of reproach or petulance, and as though he preferred letting it be thought his wishes had been neglected or overruled, than that the blame of breaking a promise should be cast elsewhere. Melbourne answered as became him:—

"I have just received your letter of yesterday. I am much obliged to you for the kindness and consideration of it. I feel very keenly the manner in which these gentlemen have been treated, and the situation in which you are placed, and I admit that it is no excuse either to them or to you that the error has happened accidentally or through inadvertence. I think it would be better, if possible, to avoid a new Commission, but if you feel it to be due to Sir C. Grey and Mr. Bicheno, and to save our honour, I will press upon Duncannon the absolute necessity of issuing it, taking upon myself the whole responsibility of doing so. If you can be satisfied with the course which you point out in the second paragraph of your letter, I will directly write to these gentlemen, explaining to them the whole of the circumstances, expressing to them my great sorrow at the accident, and promising them that if any opportunity should occur of repairing it, it shall be immediately taken advantage of. At any rate I think, upon reflection, you will hardly feel that you can take such a step as that to which you allude upon such a point as this, and at the same time do justice either to yourself or to the public interest. I dare say you are anxious enough to be released, but for God's sake consider that you are embarked, and that it is not an indifferent matter upon what occasion and in what manner you retire. Prospective change is generally exaggerated, and it is very probable that we have overrated, and may at present still more overrate the evil which would arise from a dissolution of the Government; but everything is due to the King, and much is due to that portion of the country who have supported us notwithstanding the errors which we have committed and the blind confidence with which they often act. Internal differences more than external pressure make it difficult for any Government in these times to subsist for any length of time."²

The Lord President accepted his offer, and thereupon he wrote letters of explanation in the sense above stated:—

"I have written to Sir Charles Grey, but I have somehow or another mislaid Mr. Bicheno's address. I wish you would send it to me, and

¹ To the same, September 10th, 1834, MS.

² From South Street, September 12th, 1834, MS.

I will immediately forward my letter to him also. All appears to have gone off well at Edinburgh, though they considered themselves sitting the whole time upon a barrel of gunpowder. The Chancellor writes me word that he will be in town two or three days before the 25th."¹

"The Chancellor was conservative at Inverness; but, changing his opinions as often as his horses, by the time he got to Dundee he was downright revolutionary. Here he was at the full; at Edinburgh he waned."²

No respite was afforded to the reconstructed Government by either of the contending parties in Ireland. On the requisition of Lords Roden, Enniskillen, and Farnham, an aggregate meeting of the friends of the Church Establishment took place at the Mansion House, Dublin, attended by upwards of three thousand influential landed proprietors, clergymen, and merchants, "to consider the alarming situation of the Protestants of Ireland, and to protect their religion and property." Lord Winchilsea attended to offer the support of their brethren in England; and, as a pledge of his determination, announced that he was himself about to become an Orangeman. It was unanimously resolved to thank the House of Lords for throwing out the Tithe Bill; to declare that the Establishment was the basis of the Union; that the measures of the Government tended to subvert Protestantism and erect Popery in its place, and that Protestants should be prepared to die in defence of their religion.³

O'Connell lost as little time in resuming a threatening tone. In a series of letters from Derrynane he reviewed the disappointing course of legislation during the administration of Earl Grey, exulting in his fall, and fearing that his successor had not firmness of resolve to mend the ways of rule. Sectarian ascendancy and political exclusion had not yet been renounced; the war for tithe still distracted the country; and public meetings being no longer subject to inhibition by the Executive, he was preparing to renew the agitation for Repeal. Lord J. Russell thought that if he did, so soon after a ministry had been broken up by the abandonment of the powers of suppression, it would be necessary to call Parliament together earlier than usual.⁴ Melbourne would not readily believe that, under a more tolerant and comprehensive policy, any political organisation was likely to be formed endangering the connection between the two countries. He had studied the anatomy of Irish existence for himself; and understood the comparative strength of its conflicting elements. He knew the tenacity of hold, the oneness of feeling, the thoroughness of organisation, and the habitual self-reliance of the old social garrison; and he was convinced that the Executive had but to give the signal for taking them back into its former confidence to render all schemes of national severance vain. For him there was no terror in threats of agitation; and having undertaken to govern by constitutional means

¹ From Downing Street, September 18th, 1834, MS.

² *Examiner*, Sept. 21st, 1834. ³ August 14th, 1834.

⁴ To Melbourne, September, 1834, MS.

alone, he was averse from seeming to doubt the eventual efficacy of the experiment ere it had been fully tried. To the President of the Council the Premier wrote:—

“I certainly agree with you in the views which you take of O’Connell’s proceedings. I have reason to think that what he has done is disapproved by some of the popular members who generally support him in the House of Commons, and that such disapprobation has been expressed to him. This may probably check him in his career; and if he does take active measures on his part, or if the measures which he does not take are not likely to be successful, we must not be too active on our side, nor before the public feeling and opinion. The cause and grounds of such measures as I mentioned in my last must be clearly and amply sufficient to expound to Parliament and to the country.”¹

Early in October Mr. O’Loghlen was made Irish Solicitor-General, and for the first time since the Revolution the Catholics saw one of their communion recognised as worthy of public trust and honour, as a law adviser of the Crown. His personal popularity, and high professional standing, in some degree mollified the anger his promotion caused among the partisans of exclusion; and they sought comfort in reflecting that Mr. Blackburn still remained Attorney-General. Popular satisfaction was proportionately abated thereby; but as an unmistakable proof of an altered policy, the fact was recognised by all reflecting men; and regarded as an omen of better days.

About the same time the venerable Sir John Newport, who had spent a long and stainless life in the service of his country, was appointed Comptroller of the Exchequer. The contemporary of Grattan, Plunket, and Ponsonby, he had won the respect of men of all parties in Parliament by the manly, temperate, and consistent advocacy of every measure of legislative improvement carried in his time. Lord Wellesley’s friendship for him had been from boyhood one of affection, and he did not hesitate to ascribe to his encouragement and guidance his own first strivings after fame. Newport was now grown old, and had been jostled out of his seat for Waterford by louder competitors for popular favour. But Melbourne, who had sat with him for nearly twenty years in opposition, felt that he could not more worthily bestow the favour of the Crown.

The first Garter to be given away had been conferred on the Duke of Norfolk; about the disposal of the next likely to be vacant, he wrote to Lord Lansdowne:—

“I wished to say one word to you at Holland House, before you went away, but missed the opportunity, which forces me to trouble you with this letter, lest I should be too late in the morning. From what I hear of Lord Chatham’s state of health, I think it not impossible that his blue riband may become vacant ere long, and I wish to be prepared for the event. Your claim upon the next vacancy was fully

¹ September 10th, 1834, MS.

admitted upon the last occasion, but some circumstances have occurred of which I think it right that you should be put in possession, in order that you yourself may consider and decide whether they make any difference in your views. The Duke of Grafton, as you may remember, declined the riband which became vacant by the death of Lord Bathurst, and it was conferred upon the Duke of Norfolk. Not very long after this had taken place, he came to me and stated that the offer had been made to him when he was suffering under great affliction from the recent loss of his son; that his mind was much cast down by that event; and that under the influence of melancholy, and almost of despair, he had declined the honour, as he should at that moment have done any other offer of worldly distinction or advantage; that upon reflection since he felt that he had acted hastily and disrespectfully towards the King in so doing; that he had had an audience of his Majesty in order to express his regret, and that his feelings were entirely altered upon the subject. That relation was confirmed to me by the King, who had evidently been hurt by the Duke's refusal, and felt anxious that he should receive a mark of favour which had often before been conferred upon his family. I certainly do not myself perceive why this change, and the great willingness of the Duke of Grafton to accept that which he before refused, should make any change in your situation: that is entirely for yourself to decide; but I have thought it right that you should be acquainted with these occurrences in order that you may give them such weight as you may think they deserve, and act upon them as you think proper."¹

The characteristic reply of his correspondent waiving all personal pretensions, left him free to bestow the much-coveted decoration as might seem best for the interest of the party; and his Grace of Grafton, who was a steady Whig, had the blue riband.

On the evening of the 16th of October, as Melbourne sat at dinner with Althorp and Auckland, a message from Downing Street conveyed the startling intelligence that the Houses of Parliament were on fire. All were quickly on the spot, as were Palmerston, Hobhouse, Lords Munster and Adolphus Fitzclarence, and the Speaker's eldest son. They remained for some hours conferring with and encouraging those who directed the military and the police in their efforts to circumscribe the ravages of the flames. Before midnight it was the Premier's duty to acquaint the King at Windsor of what had occurred. He believed it would have no little effect upon the royal mind; and he felt it impossible to banish its influence from his own.

In the gloomy recesses of his loneliness the image of the fire frequently presented itself. He could not pretend even to himself that he was superstitious; he never was able to believe as much as other men, and he was sorry for it. As for auguries, he would have laughed and scoffed at the very notion, were it gravely propounded by fanatic

¹ To Lansdowne, October, 1834, MS.

or soothsayer. And yet there was something depressing and disheartening for him in the burning up of the oak-panelled chapel where he had heard Fox and Wyndham and Pitt. The old system of Parliamentary representation, under which the country had risen to unprecedented greatness, was gone, and he had helped to put an end to it, not without misgivings ; for with all its anomalies and faults, his reading and reflection bid him doubt whether any one could tell how the new system substituted for it would work. With a monarch able to sway by his energy or example the national mind—an aristocracy willing to adapt their still vast means of social and political influence to the altered condition of things—and a hierarchy up to the mark of the time in intellect, and capable of competing with subversive and disintegrating philosophy and fashion, he would, he thought, feel confident still of all going well again. But with a Prince like William IV., hardly to be kept from betraying the weakness of premature old age to the irreverent eyes of the outer world ; a House of Peers impelled apparently by no further-sighted aim than that of avenging the humiliation they had lately brought upon themselves ; and with church dignitaries too frequently content with a perfunctory discharge of their office, with a cold and bald ceremonial, and (as he knew practically too well) with the traditional habit of treating holy orders as a legal admission to a trading guild, he could not feel sanguine or secure. Beneath his air of levity and enjoyment of good company and good-humour, the sense of responsibility weighed heavily upon him, and there were solitary moments when he believed that he had been happier, and would be happier again, without primary accountability for the fate of an Empire. In moods like these the glare of the flame that no efforts could quench during that still October night rose ominously in his imagination ; and he was half vexed at observing how little of historic sentiment in the public mind the catastrophe revealed. The newspapers nearly all affected a utilitarian tone on the occasion ; and there were not wanting expressions of congratulation that an inadequate and incommodious structure had been removed without the loss of life or much property of value, greatly facilitating thereby the erection of a more convenient senate house. The King on the morrow of the disaster made it known that he was ready to place Buckingham Palace, then nearly refitted for his use, at the service of Parliament. His minister encouraged the idea, without caring to inquire how far it would eventually prove to be practicable, from a genuine desire that Royalty should make itself popular, and glad of the opportunity thus afforded. Subsequent consideration led to the conviction that as Westminster Hall and the Courts of Law and the Speaker's residence, with many of the indispensable buildings near it, had escaped destruction, it would be more for the general convenience to fit up temporary accommodation for the two branches of the legislature on the site where they had so long been accustomed to assemble. The walls of the House of Lords were still standing, and Sir John Hobhouse, as Commissioner of Woods and

Forests, reported that when newly roofed they would suffice to afford eligible lodgings for a Ten-pound House of Commons. The Lords might contrive to do very well with the old Painted Chamber, whose tapestries had been burned, and whose aspect was seared and sullied by the fire, but which might be refitted and refurnished suitably though not imposingly as an hereditary chamber. The First Lord agreed with a shrug; and the workmen were soon busy with the execution of the plan, which answered better than was anticipated. The temporary House of Commons, though with approaches and corridors no better than a third-rate theatre, answered tolerably well for the transaction of business; its acoustic properties proving unexceptionable. The peers were dissatisfied, as well they might be, with the undignified and uncomfortable chamber provided for them. By way of consolation it was promised that the first portion of the new palace of Westminster about to be built should be a suitable and splendid hall for their lordships: and in due time the promise was redeemed, though Melbourne did not live to see it.

CHAPTER XXII.

DISMISSAL OF THE WHIGS.

Althorp becomes a peer—Interview with the King—Change of Government—Conduct of Brougham—Peel summoned from Rome—Speech at Melbourne—Address from Derby.

DURING the autumn Melbourne became aware that Lord Spencer's health was rapidly declining; and in answer to inquiries from the King, who expressed no ordinary concern, he felt it to be his duty to communicate Althorp's belief that his father drew near his end. At length the event occurred so long anticipated, but of which the consequences, immediate or eventual, were equally unforeseen by the wise who were supposed to be in the secrets of state and the simple who looked on from without; by those who held and those who coveted office; by the familiars of the Court and the editors of the daily press; by Westminster Hall, ever open-eared for the first whistling of the wind of change, and the money market, susceptible as the aspen leaf to its lightest breath. Except one old gentleman, never before suspected of the faculty of reticence, and his private secretary, no one in the three kingdoms seems to have been aware of what was actually impending; and as all the wit of party interest and party passion was for the residue of the year employed in vivisectioning the acts and motives, words and looks of all who might or ought to have known anything about it, without discovering any accomplice before the fact, we may

safely give William IV. the historical benefit of his boast that, "alone he did it."

Late in the afternoon of the 10th of November, Earl Spencer died at Althorp, in his seventy-seventh year. Age and infirmity had long withdrawn him from the world ; but his mind continued clear ; his delight in the progress of his favourite life-work, the library at Althorp, continued unabated ; and his patriotic interest in public affairs, though chilled by the loss of the rarely endowed and accomplished wife of his youth, was rekindled by the prominent and popular position of his son in the administration. The friend of Fox and Burke, he lived to see the religious freedom advocated by the one, and the democratic liberty claimed by the other ; and the manumission of race pleaded for by both, accomplished in his day ; and if his hands had to be held up by his old companion Grey, he had the satisfaction of feeling that those of his son had been actively engaged in securing the triple victory. The morning papers of the 12th announced his demise, and commented variously on the effects of the vacancy thus caused in the leadership of the Commons and the Ministry of Finance by Lord Althorp's elevation to the House of Peers. No exaggerated sense of the ministerial loss was affected by any of them. In a careful and dispassionate article the *Times* discussed the probabilities of the situation and left the balance of good and evil almost doubtful :—

"The most obvious consequence is the loss to Government of a decidedly favourite leader of the House of Commons. But there are other quarters of no less importance where it does not appear that Lord Althorp succeeded in acquiring equal popularity. His career as Chancellor of the Exchequer being now terminated, we hope that his successor may exhibit a more ample and well-digested knowledge of the public resources, and come better prepared both to defend his measures and to execute them. Mr. Spring Rice has, it seems, been designated by members of the moneyed interest, and we believe by his colleagues, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. But before we can form any confident opinion of his fitness it would be desirable to ascertain what personal share he had in the suggestion and preparation of those budgets which were ostensibly the work of Lord Althorp. The present Lord Spencer's earnest wish is said to be to retire into private life ; and without meaning in any sense to disparage the weight which Lord Melbourne may fairly attach to the experience, the name, and upright character of this nobleman, it is unquestionable that, since his chief value to the Government was as leader of the House of Commons, his secession from the Cabinet would now be less felt than while a member of that assembly. The choice of leader of the House of Commons will be the most perplexing of all that class of difficulties. It is not for us to pronounce an opinion, but it may be said that Mr. Abercromby has most experience and tact. Has he also sufficient nerve and strength?"

The *Chronicle* and *Globe* were full of confident anticipations that Lord Spencer would remain in the Cabinet, and that Lord John

Russell would prove a worthy successor in the department of finance. The organs of Opposition naturally wrapped their well-worn criticisms on the defects of the noble Commoner in the amplitude of compliments *ad invidiam* to the noble earl. They never, in fact, made so much of him before; and for the best act he had ever done never patted him on the back as they did when they hoped they were bidding him good-bye. But nowhere was there a hint muttered of an official revolution. The Cabinet was not summoned to meet. Holland, Lansdowne, J. Russell, and Palmerston had several consultations with the Premier; but of the movements of their colleagues during the three succeeding days the public took no heed. In the afternoon Melbourne wrote to the King requesting an audience to submit for the royal consideration the views entertained by ministers of the general position of the Government, and their advice with regard to the future. He had, indeed, certain misgivings regarding the intentions of his friend, as the terms of his letter of condolence show.

“MY DEAR ALTHORP,—I would not intrude upon you, whilst you must be under the impression of the recent melancholy event, of which I know that frequent anticipation cannot diminish the force, if I did not fear that you might perhaps omit to write to the King upon the subject. I have kept him day by day informed of your father's state, and he has continually expressed the most lively interest and concern. I am anxious therefore that he should hear from yourself without delay, and if, as is most probable, you have already done this, I am sure you will forgive my interference. I have not forgotten your letter to me, when the present Government was formed, with respect of your conduct in case of that event occurring which has now taken place. I say nothing at present except that I trust that you will not come hastily to any unalterable determination; particularly in the frame of mind which is produced by such scenes as those which you have been recently contemplating. I hope also that you will not suffer yourself to be influenced by any indiscreet communications which you may receive from any other quarter. I do not know of any such, but I think them not improbable.”¹

On his arrival at the Pavilion, William IV. received him without any seeming diminution of kindness or confidence. The conversation lasted for an hour and a half; and to the unsuspecting Minister it appeared the wish of the King to disembarass the discussion of all reserve. Melbourne, in a mood of false security, spoke, as he afterwards acknowledged, in a tone of more than ordinary considerateness respecting the reconstitution of the Government. It was not in his nature to be ungracious or ungrateful; and as he listened to the fretful misgivings and petulant complainings of his wayward Sovereign about the Irish Church projects of Duncannon and the recent antics of the Chancellor, he was beguiled into a tone too sympathetic for his own subsequent approval or for the real interest of his master. His shrewd-

¹ November 11th, 1834.—Sir D. le Marchant, Memoir of Viscount Althorp.

ness was for once at fault. Living as he did habitually in the open air of public opinion, he forgot the depth of fatuity into which a feeble understanding may sink when left to maunder in seclusion and undiscernment, even though that seclusion be regal, and that undiscernment be the fruit chiefly of ineptitude to comprehend what goes on palpably under the palace windows. The wish to soothe what he regarded as mere peevish irritation, and doubtless likewise to gratify his own feeling of magnanimity and personal independence, led him to place himself at the disposition of one whom it was, after all, his duty to guide with firm and faithful counsel, and not to humour to his own hurt or hazard. It never occurred to the most common-sensical of ministers that William IV., after the failure of two attempts to overrule the majority of the House of Commons, was already full of a third. The Cabinet might not be as strong as could be wished, and the loss of the lieutenant whom he loved and trusted might for the moment be irreparable ; but, after all that had happened since 1830, the idea that a minority of one-third in the Commons should undertake the government, against the will and without the acquiescence of the majority, never crossed his mind. When, therefore, he began by frankly enumerating his chief administrative causes of concern, and invited the Sovereign to say whether he desired him to remain his chief minister, or whether he would rather look elsewhere for advice, there can be little doubt that he may possibly have been thinking of his kinsman and friend now about to take a seat beside him in the House of Lords, with greater advantages of ancestry, acreage, and actual services to his party, and higher popularity out of doors. Had the King named Lord Spencer to be Premier, every Whig would have assented, including Melbourne himself ; but he knew, or thought he knew, that his nomination would have been in vain, and he probably recoiled from suggesting it from motives in themselves honourable and commendable. The conference turned on other topics, however ; no apparent notice of his initiatory offer was taken, and it was not repeated. Neither was it qualified or explained, as perhaps it ought to have been. Silently the King chose to construe it into a suggestion of a change of parties, while Melbourne meant it only as a profession of individual willingness to play an unselfish part. Several versions have been given of what ensued, seemingly irreconcilable, but capable of being reconciled in the main by keeping in view the essential difference of purpose above indicated.

According to the King's account of what passed, Melbourne said that as the personal influence of Althorp in the House of Commons was considered a main basis of the administration when he undertook the management of affairs, he felt it to be his duty, now that Althorp was removed from the Lower House, to ask whether it was his Majesty's wish that he should propose to him fresh appointments, or whether his Majesty preferred asking advice from other persons. He disclaimed any wish to abandon the service of his Sovereign as long as it was thought he could be useful. He felt confident that the exist-

ing administration would still retain the support of the House of Commons, and he was then prepared to submit arrangements suitable to the occasion.

In answer to the inquiry who was to be charged with the conduct of public business in the Lower House, he submitted the name of Lord John Russell as best qualified by experience, talent, and position : but he suggested in the alternative those of Spring Rice and Abercromby, either of whom would be deemed competent and acceptable by the Liberal party. The King discussed at considerable length the qualifications of each, but persistently disapproved of all. He objected strongly to Lord J. Russell, and said without reserve that he had not the abilities nor the influence which would qualify him for the task ; observing that he would make a wretched figure when opposed by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Stanley. Melbourne thought the King laid more stress than was justifiable upon the necessity of being a good speaker or ready debater ; these being advantages which Lord Althorp did not possess, while he exercised an extraordinary influence in the House of Commons. The King objected equally, if not more, to Mr. Abercromby. He confessed that he was alarmed by some recent suggestions of Lord Duncannon to retrench the parochial endowment of the Church in Ireland in parishes where there was no cure of souls ; and that he feared the result of the pending Commission of inquiry into the relative proportion of religious communities there. He viewed with alarm the advancement of Lord John, who was pledged to like opinions. When he agreed to the numbering of the Irish people according to the creeds they professed, he had given no pledge, as the minister would remember, to adopt measures founded on the numerical proportion it might disclose ; and he therefore considered himself free to refuse his assent to measures that he anticipated might be founded thereon. This would probably lead to serious difficulties with his confidential advisers, if, knowing their individual opinions beforehand, he now handed over the leading conduct of affairs in Parliament to those from whose views he differed widely. His Majesty was evidently under the impression that Lansdowne and Spring Rice would relinquish office sooner than acquiesce in the expropriation of any portion of Church property in Ireland for general purposes of education ; and their secession after the loss of Althorp would complete the dismemberment of the Cabinet of July. He said that Lord Lansdowne had told him, on the secession of Mr. Stanley and those who retired with him, that he concurred most decidedly in their feelings on the Church question, and that the earnest solicitation of Lord Grey alone induced him to continue a member of the Administration. Melbourne did not upon this occasion, or upon any other, admit that differences of opinion prevailed in the Cabinet which might produce its dissolution before the meeting of Parliament ; nor did he express any doubt of his ability to carry on the government. But his Majesty thought he knew better than his responsible ministers how far they were agreed, and the strength they could command in the Commons. There was in truth no likelihood

of schism, or of any important defection on the question of the Irish Church, as the confidential correspondence and the public proceedings of the next few months conclusively prove. Wholly unsuspecting of what was impending, he reasoned each point frankly but forbearingly with his illogical and impulsive master, trusting that upon reflection he would come of himself to see the expediency of following his counsel. Melbourne was, in feeling as in policy, a royalist, and he shrank from even seeming to humiliate his weak and wilful sovereign, who was sensible, as he himself declared, "of the frank and unreserved manner in which Melbourne had discussed the whole subject and had replied to the various questions he had put to him; but he failed in convincing him that any arrangement could be made which would enable him to carry on the government satisfactorily, or which could prevent the early dissolution of the Administration at a period more inconvenient and more pregnant with exciting causes."¹ In a long conversation in which various difficulties and objections were discussed, but without giving the minister any reason to suspect what was contemplated, his Majesty said he would take time to think over the matter, and ended the consultation by saying, "Now let us go to dinner." Nothing more occurred during the evening; but next morning the King handed Melbourne a letter, evidently prepared with no little care, in which he stated that he was informed that Althorp's removal would speedily leave the Government in a minority in the Lower House; and as they were already in that condition in the Upper, it had become necessary to place the conduct of affairs in other hands. No alternative proposal was suggested, or qualification offered of the peremptory nature of the dismissal. In the words of Palmerston, "The Government had not resigned, but were dismissed; and this not in consequence of having proposed any measure of which the King disapproved and which they would not give up, but because it was thought they were not strong enough in the Commons to carry on the business of the country, and their places were to be filled up by men who were notoriously weak and unpopular in the Lower House, however strong they might be in the Upper one."

The democratic enthusiasm which had lately carried Reform had indeed declined, but a sudden attempt to resume paramount authority by the Crown would be certain to rekindle aggressive hopes and schemes. If there must be a change of hands, Melbourne wished, for the sake of the monarchy and of his own order, that it should be brought about in a constitutional manner. He felt it therefore to be his duty to remind his Sovereign that a large majority in Parliament had upon every question of importance supported the Administration. William IV. replied that they were in a minority in the Peers, and he had reason to believe that they would speedily be in the same condition in the Commons; he added peremptorily that they had better

¹ "A Statement of His Majesty's General Proceedings since his Accession," I. Stockmar, p. 314. Letter from Palmerston, November 15th, 1834.

therefore resign without loss of self-respect. It would have been impossible to press the matter further. It unhappily seemed as though his Majesty had been misled into the unconstitutional course of taking counsel of others without the knowledge of his legitimate advisers ; and that he was about to follow some secret and irresponsible counsel in opposition to their advice. Half a century before, George III. had turned out the Whigs as summarily ; but the days for such royal exploits were gone, and the days of danger in re-attempting them were come.

Melbourne did not affect to conceal his surprise and concern at what he justly deemed an act of perilous infatuation. Too proud to parley for the retention of office after confidence in his judgment had been so unceremoniously withdrawn, he rejected, in the briefest terms which deference would allow, the offer of an earldom and the Garter. He felt that he had been trifled with and mocked ; and the blood mantled to his cheek as he haughtily inquired what further commands awaited him. A moment afterwards he relented. He felt that he ought not to shrink, through any feeling of false delicacy, from stating calmly but plainly the difficulties and dangers into which the short-sighted monarch was about to plunge. A majority of at least two-thirds in the Lower House were known to be opposed to the policy of holding down Ireland any longer by measures of exclusion and force. A dissolution under ordinary circumstances might alter these proportions ; but a dissolution brought about by no act of ministers, and by no vote of either House of Parliament, would inevitably evoke popular emotions that long had slept. For himself he asked no consideration ; but to spare the feelings of others who were alluded to in the note disparagingly, and to mitigate the resentment it was calculated to excite, "In the handsomest manner, and from feelings of devotion and attachment to which his Majesty was anxious to do the fullest justice, he suggested a partial alteration which, without changing the general sense, divested this communication of all that could give offence to any individual ; and it thus appeared that the declared and ostensible ground of his Majesty's decision was his conviction that the general weight and consideration of the Government had been so much diminished in the House of Commons and with the country at large, as to render it impossible that they should continue to conduct the public affairs with advantage."¹ The personal allusions to Lord John and the Chancellor were thus omitted, together with the imprudent declaration of royal hostility to Irish Church reform, which the prescient sagacity of Melbourne saw could only lead to grave embarrassment, and to his Majesty's humiliation. The rapidity with which all these contingent consequences were grasped, and the magnanimity of his whole demeanour under circumstances so trying, were only equalled by the considerate tact with which he made use of his last opportunity to

¹ Statement of his Majesty, etc., already quoted.

give confidential advice as a minister. He then desired to know when and to whom he should resign his trust. The King replied that he had made up his mind to send at once for the Duke of Wellington.

As he passed through the adjoining room he could not refrain from saying to Sir Herbert Taylor, by whose aid he knew that the written form of his dismissal had been prepared, "Your old master would not have done this." The private secretary was embarrassed, as he well might be, what to reply; and in his confusion said he had just concluded a letter to Sir Henry Wheatley which his master thought it of the utmost importance to have delivered that night. Would his lordship object to allowing his servant, on reaching town, to leave it at St. James's Palace? It was impossible not to divine that the missive which the perplexed amanuensis had just sealed contained a summons to the Duke. The ludicrous aspect of the affair was irresistible; and Melbourne with a grim smile undertook to play the part of first mute at his own funeral. Ere quitting Brighton he wrote to Althorp:—

"I came down here yesterday, in order to converse with the King upon the present state of affairs, and after two very full and unreserved communications, he has determined that the present Government is so weak in the House of Lords, and is now so much weakened in the House of Commons, that it cannot go on advantageously: that therefore he will not direct me to make the announcement rendered necessary by the recent event, but will send for the Duke of Wellington. The various reasons for this determination will present themselves to your mind, and I apprehend you will not much lament it, as it both relieves you from any further annoyance, and also falls in with that which was your opinion, viz., that it would be better that the Tories should make one more effort to form a Government. Whether the King's decision be wise or not, I am convinced that it has been come to conscientiously, and upon his own conviction, and not in consequence of any other advice or influence whatsoever."

It was not unnatural that others should form a different opinion, and give it expression in no measured terms. But Melbourne had looked into the shallow mind of the King as they had not done, and his penetrating gaze had discovered nothing such as they supposed. In point of fact, the Duke of Wellington had not had any communication with the Court, directly or indirectly, for the three months preceding; and Sir Robert Peel had so little notion of being within call, that his servants on the following day were unable to tell with any degree of certainty where a letter would reach him abroad.

What were the thoughts of the dismissed minister during his solitary drive on that November evening? Did memory recall the words of Clarendon regarding his ancestor, Secretary Coke, sacrificed by Charles I. to a dark contrivance of the Court—"it put the Queen to the exercise of her full power to perfect her work; which afterwards produced many sad disasters"?¹ The Duke should have the

¹ History, vol. i. p. 221.

royal message ere he slept ; but what would he do ?" Without Peel he could do nothing ; and Peel was in Italy. Even were he here he would hardly risk his reputation in a premature effort to attain power with a majority of a hundred against them in the Commons. Lyndhurst and Wharnccliffe might be rash and ready as they were two years before ; but would the Duke tell the King to-morrow that without a hostile vote or a resignation he ought to change the Government ? It was late when the fallen minister reached Downing Street, where Palmerston alone was to be found. With him he spent the evening, and having summoned a Cabinet for the following morning, was about retiring to rest, when the Chancellor, on his way from Holland House, looked in just to hear that all was right. Inexpressible was his amazement at learning that all was wrong. Melbourne, before going into details, made him promise to divulge nothing till they all met next day—and considering that it was then near midnight, his sanguine estimate of how far it was safe to gratify the curiosity of his importunate questioner may be excused : at least, it would have been excusable with respect to any other man, but in his case it was no doubt an error, and ere many hours its consequences were ripe and bitter. Before he slept Brougham communicated the startling intelligence to the *Times*, in which next morning the following paragraph appeared :—

"We have no authority for the important statement which follows but we have every reason to believe that it is perfectly true. We give it without any comment or amplification, in the very words of the communication, which reached us at a late hour last night. 'The King has taken the opportunity of Lord Spencer's death to turn out the Ministry, 'and there is every reason to believe the Duke of Wellington has been sent for. The Queen has done it all.'"

Before they had time to receive any private intimation the next morning, his colleagues learned with amazement, that they had been dismissed. On entering the breakfast-room Lady Lansdowne read the paragraph to her lord, who smiled in his usual way, and began to talk of something else without giving the announcement a thought. In a few minutes a brief note from South Street confirmed the tidings ; and by noon the principal members of the Cabinet had assembled to consider what should be done. Their deliberations were brief and to little purpose. Their chief failed to impress them with his view of the transaction ; and there can be no doubt that, if not at first, the notion soon gained ground that he had been too easy in his mode of dealing with the Sovereign, and that he had too quietly acquiesced in an indefensible attempt to resume the old ways of prerogative which it was imagined had with George III. passed from the thoughts of men. Lansdowne, with whom he made most confidence, was disposed to look at the matter through his eyes. "Nobody," he said, "so well understood as Melbourne how to manage William IV. Even he could not perhaps have kept him right had all been left to him ; but after the unwarrantable announcement on the morning of the

15th, and the open imputations of intrigue and deception that broke forth on all sides, it became hopeless."¹

The Duke received at Strathfieldsaye the royal summons early on the 15th, and, without returning to town, reached Brighton late in the afternoon. The King told him no one had as yet been made aware of what he had done the previous day; and it is said that when the names of the guests who were to dine that evening were presented by the lord-in-waiting to Queen Adelaide, she expressed surprise that the list included his Grace, of whose arrival she was not aware. He represented at the outset the impossibility of any Tory combination which would afford the prospect of carrying on the Government unless Sir Robert Peel was at its head; and the Liberal majority in the Commons being two to one, he did not see how even with that advantage success could attend the experiment. For his own part he was willing to occupy any position that might be considered expedient, but he was endeavouring to dissuade his Majesty from proceeding further in a change of hands so unprepared, when Sir Herbert Taylor entered the room, and apologized for calling his royal master's attention to the paragraph in the *Times* that morning, which stated that "the Queen had done it all." The anger which these long-remembered words excited may be readily conceived. "There, Duke, you see how I am insulted and betrayed; nobody in London but Melbourne knew last night what had taken place here, nor of my sending for you: will your Grace compel me to take back people who have treated me in this way?" The Duke yielded; and said he would at once communicate with Lord Lyndhurst, and despatch a messenger in quest of the indispensable member for Tamworth. Early on Sunday, the 16th, Mr. Hudson was told to be in readiness to bear despatches abroad; and the Chief Baron found himself for the third time Keeper of the Great Seal. The King was determined to make a clearance of the whole party; Lord Duncannon was sent for out of church to give up the Seals, and a council was summoned for Monday morning, that the change of Government might be completed with the least possible delay. Meanwhile Palmerston believed the whole affair to have been pre-arranged:—

"It is impossible to doubt that this has been a preconcerted measure, and that the Duke of Wellington was prepared at once to form a Government. Peel is abroad, but it is not likely he would have gone without a previous understanding one way or the other with the Duke, as to what he would do, if a crisis were to arise. I lament this event because I can see nothing but mischief arising out of it."

Brougham was beside himself with rage. To Earl Spencer he broke forth:—

"What you and I and all men of sound minds thought impossible, is come to pass, and only because you are removed from the House of Commons the King turns us all out, a thing never before done, and

¹ In conversation with the author.

without waiting for the House of Commons to express its distrust in John Russell or in us. It is incredible but the Duke will be goaded on by his hungry creatures to try this desperate experiment. I have written to the King to throw all the consequences on him and relieve myself."¹

At the last meeting of the superseded Cabinet, Melbourne indicated his opinion that Lord John ought to undertake thenceforth to lead the party in the Commons.² Palmerston looked gravest, and hastened back to his standing desk to complete despatches with whose importance his mind was full; Brougham talked more loudly and wildly than ever, and rushed about during the afternoon to tell the little that he knew and to supply the rest from conjecture; Duncannon seemed the angriest at what had happened, and was the most inclined to cavil at the opportunity which he thought had been gratuitously afforded to the Court of getting rid of them. But in Melbourne pride was more powerful than ambition; he had made Althorp's ministerial aid the condition of his taking the Premiership; and although he had grown convinced that it was not indispensable, he could not bring himself to say so to a weak and suspicious Sovereign, and provoke the possible reproach of eagerness to escape from still recent obligation. Sooner than do this he was willing individually to leave his Majesty free to choose in whom he would repose his chief confidence; and William IV. was not slow to fasten on the generous but unguarded offer. Had he been asked to explain what he meant, Melbourne would certainly have said, as he was in honour and consistency bound to say, that the head of the future administration should be sought for among men whom Parliament and the public generally would recognise as entitled to guide in council. He certainly did not believe, and he therefore could not have advised, that a majority of the House of Commons or of the community at large, in the then existing state of national feeling, would accept Sir Robert Peel or the Duke of Wellington; as the event soon afterwards proved. The predominant prejudices of the constituent body were in 1808 on the side of royalty, and its arbitrary decision was therefore suffered to prevail. But two years after the Reform Act it was too soon to ignore the will of the House of Commons, and Melbourne, who was more shocked than offended at his summary dismissal, never deigned in public or private to utter a syllable of complaint. He sympathised perhaps too little in the chagrin and mortification of his party, and he sympathised not at all in the anger and resentment in which some of them indulged. He spent Saturday evening with his son, Lord Mulgrave, and Mr. E. S. Stanley at Drury Lane to witness a new play in which Mr. Yonge and Miss Ellen Tree took the principal parts. And he stayed till the end of the performance chatting and laughing as if nothing had happened.

There was no more to be said, and so he said no more, having on

¹ To Earl Spencer, November 15th, 1834.

² Lord Lansdowne to T. S. Rice, January 27th, 1835, MS.

this and every other occasion an insuperable aversion to platitudes and palaverings of all kinds. A respectful letter from him disclaiming all knowledge of the announcement in the *Times*, and wholly repudiating the imputation against the Queen, did little to appease the royal indignation, and a communication from Apsley House recommended that a council should be held at St. James's on the 17th to receive the resignation of the out-going ministers and instal certain of their successors *ad interim*. To each of his colleagues on the 16th he wrote :—

“The Duke of Wellington is appointed First Lord of the Treasury, and I have received his Majesty's commands to direct you to attend to-morrow at St. James's Palace at half-past two, in order to resign the seals of your department. A council is announced for the above-named hour.

“Yours faithfully,
“MELBOURNE.”

Lord Lansdowne explained to the King that it was not necessary he should act on the occasion as President of the Council, and he asked permission for himself and his colleagues to withdraw; which being granted, an order was made for the further prorogation of Parliament; Lyndhurst kissed his hands as Chancellor, the Duke as First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State for Home, Colonial, and Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Hudson's journey in search of a prime minister began and ended curiously enough. He was then a very young man, having been one of the royal pages and afterwards assistant to Sir Herbert Taylor, for whom he always entertained sincere regard for the priceless services rendered to the King in 1831 and 1832.¹ When the Whig ministry was dismissed Sir H. Taylor asked Hudson if he would like to go abroad. He said “Yes.” “Then you must start to-morrow morning in search of Sir R. Peel, and take him a letter from the King, and one from the Duke of Wellington.” He came to town to make inquiries about Peel, but could find no direction at his house. It was Sunday evening, and he had no money for his journey. He went to the Keeper of the Privy Purse, who told him he had nothing like £500, which Hudson said would be necessary: but through an old clerk at Herries' Bank he got that sum and set off for Paris. The news had preceded him, and he could get no information from Lord Granville or any one at the Embassy as to the whereabouts of Sir Robert. It was supposed he was still in Italy, but that was all. By dint of driving hard and paying freely, he got to Rome on the ninth day, which was considered then great speed. On reaching Peel's hotel he found that he was at a ball at Torlonia's. He left the letter with Lady Peel and returned for the answer later. When he was shown in Sir Robert stood behind a large table covered with papers, bowed formally,

¹ His papers were left in perfect order, and would have been very valuable for historical purposes, but by the order of Queen Adelaide they were all destroyed.

asked what day he had left England and what hour he had reached Rome : and then observed drily—"I think you might have made the journey in a day less, by taking another route." Hudson bit his lip with chagrin at this ungracious reception, but taking the despatches in reply, set out forthwith for England. At Paris he was very differently received ; but hurrying on to Boulogne, he had the vexation to see the mail packet steaming out of the harbour. Some fishermen undertook for a large sum to take him across in a small boat. The weather was fine ; but when close to Dover a panic seized them ; they said they would be taken prisoners if they ventured to land in England, and no expostulations of bribes could induce them to put in. Luckily Hudson was enabled to make signals to a vessel in the offing, which took him on board and landed him at Dover. On reaching London he went straight to Apsley House and left his letter for the Duke, who immediately forwarded its contents to Windsor. The Messenger was so tired that he went to his rooms at St. James's and was soon asleep. The first person of the Household whom he saw told him he had got into a devil of a scrape by omitting to present the letter for the King on the previous night. He hastened to do so ; and on entering the anteroom met an old servant, who said to him, "I did not think you were so green as to *come* with the letter, after making the mistake you have done." He took the hint, and leaving Sir Robert's reply, made his way back to town. For nearly a month he did not venture to present himself to his Majesty, who was highly displeased with him. But he was then advised to wait upon the King, and after some manifestations of ill-humour he was forgiven, and told he might keep the balance of £70 he had unspent out of the £500 he started with. He went to Tattersall's, bought a horse with the money, and went out next day with the Staghounds. But the brute turned out to be a regular screw, and threw him more than once. And this was the upshot of his first journey to Italy in the affairs of which he was destined in later life to play so conspicuous a part.

Spring Rice had told Althorp that as to the precise proposition made by Melbourne to the King in respect to the mode of filling up the Exchequer he was not informed ; having avoided asking any question whatever, lest he should be considered as having any possible wishes of a personal nature. He had stated to the members of the Government that so long as it held together on its own principles, whatever might be his expectations of the session, whether in the position he then occupied or removing elsewhere, he was ready to do anything within the compass of his own strength that would be considered expedient for the public service, always excepting anything in relation to the management of the House of Commons ; that for such duties he neither had the extended and general knowledge, the personal weight, nor the ability requisite. To Melbourne he added that to which he should still adhere ; that Abercromby would have been the safest leader ; but of course, if John Russell was proposed, he should be ready to concur.

In his own gentle but unswerving way, Lord Spencer made his condemnation known of the conduct of the King. Personally he had no reason to complain, for it had given him that liberation from the yoke of office for which he had so frequently striven in vain. He was at length relieved from trammels and obligations the burthen of which had become ineffably wearisome ;¹ and it was the act of his Majesty that had set him free. Private feeling and public decorum closed his lips for the time. He remained for some weeks at Althorp in seclusion, and finally made up his mind to take no further part in public affairs. But in the calm of his retirement he was peculiarly qualified to weigh the motives which had led to the dismissal of his late colleagues, and the consequences of that dismissal ; and his judgment was unwavering and stern. He suggested to Mr. Hume, with whom he had never had any private confidence, and very intermittent public agreement, "that an early opportunity should be taken to ascertain what the opinion of the new House of Commons was upon the mode in which Lord Melbourne had been dismissed."² In his view, the conduct of William IV. was not only reprehensible, but far too dangerous as an example to be suffered to pass unrep rehended by Parliament. As he was resolved never again to lead, he refrained from doing more than letting his opinion be known as a member of the party ; but, except to resign his father's insignia of the Garter, he abstained from attending at Court.

To earnest remonstrances against withdrawal from public life Lord Spencer pleaded the condition of his fortune ; for with a nominal income of £50,000 he would not have £10,000 to spend. He was bound to keep up Althorp, and that consequently a fall in rents of twenty per cent. would leave him in actual necessity : that he meant to let Spencer House, and to reside almost exclusively in the country. He stated, among other considerations, that if he did take up a position in politics, it might be considered more or less as looking hereafter to form a Government ; that even on personal grounds he felt, if such alternative were presented to him, he would wish to escape from it, as he did not think himself competent for such a task ; and, moreover, that he considered private circumstances very different from his own to be a *sine quâ non* for a Prime Minister. He saw no possibility of his change of opinion. His anticipations were that the next Government would be formed by Lords Grey and Stanley.³

Lord Lyndhurst had hardly resumed his former place on the woolsack, when he received a letter from Brougham offering to take the vacant seat in the Exchequer, thus saving the country, as he said, his pension of £5,000 a year. The proposal was laid before the Duke, by whom it was at once rejected ; and a friendly intimation being made by the Chancellor that the dignity of Chief Baron was likely to be bestowed on Scarlett, his predecessor sought to retrieve his mistake by

¹ Letter to Lord Holland, February 9th, 1835.

² Letter to Joseph Hume, M.P., January 31st, 1835.

³ T. S. Rice to Lord Lansdowne, December 7th, 1834, MS.

formally withdrawing the offer to serve in a subordinate capacity, as having been made without sufficient reflection. By whom the fact was first divulged is uncertain ; its effect when known cannot better be described than in the words of Melbourne :—

“Brougham never mentioned to me his proposition to Lyndhurst until after he had made it. I was perfectly astonished. I think it a step which proves a greater want of judgment, a grosser ignorance of his own situation, than any which he has yet taken. The original error is, in fact, only made more glaring by the subsequent retraction ; but I am not sure that this will be the general impression. I very much doubt whether the King would have been persuaded to have made him a common law judge, and I am quite sure that he would have been right in resisting it.”¹

The opinion thus early expressed is of importance to be borne in mind, as throwing light upon the reasons which led to Brougham's omission from the Cabinet when the Whigs returned to power. H. B. fixed indelibly the ridiculous air of the transaction by a cartoon, in which a fox, as like the ex-Chancellor as quadruped could be, was depicted stealthily making off from the door of the Exchequer, at which he cast a lingering glance, while Scarlett looked out from the foliage of the vine overhanging the portal, and the legend beneath in a phrase told the story of *Vaux and the Grapes*.

The Emperor Nicholas learned, at Berlin, the change which had occurred in the British Cabinet ; he gave vent to his exceeding joy and confident hope that the foreign policy of England would be wholly reversed, the Quadruple Alliance dissolved, and Belgium re-united to Holland. Count Bülow, who had long been Prussian Minister here, tried to undeceive him, but the Czar argued logically that, as the Tories were honourable men, they would bring into office the principles they avowed in opposition ; and act upon them, whatever Parliament might think, or vote to the contrary ; for if the King had the power to appoint them, regardless of the will of the House of Commons and the constituencies, he need not allow them to be removed for acting with consistency.² And here lay the kernel of the forbidden fruit rashly and blindly clutched at by the King. Though not in formal words or acts, he had done what, to his own discomfiture, would prove to be an abortive usurpation, if the constituencies were appealed to and should reverse his judgment of the policy which ought to be pursued by his ministers ; for those ministers would be held responsible to the House of Commons ; and if a majority condemned them he could not retain them in their places. The event quickly proved that in acting on his own surmise of what the country wished and wanted he had grievously and greatly erred, and had exposed not merely those whom he preferred as ministers, but the authority and dignity of the Crown itself, to needless and mortifying humiliation.

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, from Renton Abbey, December 7th, 1834.

² Greville Memoirs.

While acknowledging the various accomplishments and manly understanding of Melbourne, and that "there could not have been selected a statesman better qualified to preside over a Cabinet containing conflicting opinions and antagonistic ambitions," Lord Dalling reproaches the Administration with lack of vigour and powerlessness to maintain authority. He ascribes their alleged weakness especially to O'Connell's vanity, which the pride of the English people would not allow them to appease; and to the increasing credit and influence of Sir Robert Peel.¹ The superiority of the Conservative leader in debate had indeed been strikingly manifested in the last two sessions; still more remarkable had been his tact and discretion. Alone among his cotemporaries of the first rank, he possessed when upon his legs perfect command over the temper of his tongue; and this was the more notable, and, let it be fairly owned, the more commendable, in one whose inveterate self-consciousness and nervous irritability of constitution all the arts of the habitual actor were unable to conceal. Again and again did Canning, Brougham, O'Connell, Stanley, and above all the Duke of Wellington, startle and stagger their devoted friends by impetuous outbursts and inconsiderate sallies or pledges impossible to keep. With him, on the contrary, every word was so weighed that it might be said without exaggeration, before he answered a question or made a speech, he had in his mind corrected it for the press. His errors were errors of judgment, not of language; of calculation, not of temper; they were consequently more apt to be made in office than in opposition, but whether in or out of power (with one signal and painful exception)² he never let passion run away with him on the high-road. And it is undoubtedly true that in a season when the tide of popular ascendancy is upon the ebb, the importance, dignity, and intellectual breadth, if not height, of such a man are greatly enhanced. So far, the writer of the historic sketch may be regarded as forming a correct estimate of the time. But what is to be thought of the allegation that the Cabinet of 1834 was overthrown because it failed "to maintain authority"? Authority in legislation it had not yet had any opportunity of exercising, the session being virtually over when Lord Grey resigned. Authority in the preservation of order it certainly did maintain during the five months of its existence, both in England and in Ireland, as it had not been maintained under the Tory Government of 1828, or the Whig Government of 1830. Political agitation and social crime had observably lessened in a remarkable degree; so much so, that when a dissolution took place in the following December, all parties confessed that the perplexing element in their various estimates of the result was the unusual tranquillity, some called it apathy,

¹ 'Historical Sketch of Sir R. Peel,' p. 103.

² No one acquainted with parliamentary history needs to be reminded of the altercation in 1843 between Sir R. Peel and Mr. Cobden, in which, although for a moment he carried the feelings of the House along with him, he was the first himself to recover from the delusion into which he had been betrayed, and prompt to modify the terms of the imputation he had cast on his opponent.

of the public mind. Still less accurate is the rhetorical assertion with respect to O'Connell. Vanity indeed he had; and, like his other qualities, it looked great, for he was a great man. Just then he was not in a complaining mood, though nothing whatever had been done to gratify that feeling, or any other which he possessed in common with other prominent personages, noble and plebeian; and curiously enough, it was he who, when the Melbourne Cabinet fell, raised the first rallying cry for their reinstatement, and in a week persuaded his followers in Ireland to adjourn the discussion of Repeal and to join a new society which he called the Anti-Tory Association. Considering all that had occurred in the four years preceding, during which offices, decorations, titles, flatteries, and distinctions of all kinds had been lavished upon every other chief or leader of opinion, it would not have been surprising had he stood aloof in silent exultation, his wounded vanity being at last avenged. But to ascribe the event to such a cause is absolutely without justification; and not less groundless is the fantastic notion that the reason why his vanity could not be appeased was because the pride of the English people would be mortified at honour being paid to one who had defied their power. Subsequent events tell a very different tale.

Of the cashiered Cabinet, Auckland alone retained office for some weeks at the request of the Duke for the convenience of the public service. Brougham, unable to dissemble his chagrin, fled to France; Lord Lansdowne betook himself to Bowood; Lord John to Woburn; Spring Rice to Hastings; Abercromby to Scotland; and their late chief to Derbyshire. On the 26th of November he received an address from the inhabitants of Melbourne conveying to him their surprise and regret at his recent removal from office, and their grateful sense of his public services: to which he replied:—

“I beg leave to return you my warmest and most grateful thanks for this address. It is indeed a great satisfaction to me to return hither, after an absence of now more than four years, and to find myself again amongst those with some of whom I am connected by the relations of property, and to all of whom I am united by the strongest ties of friendship and attachment, and by the common interest which we all feel in the welfare and prosperity of the nation at large and of this part of the country in particular. The pleasure which I should naturally feel upon such an occasion is greatly enhanced by this testimony of your approbation of my public conduct. With respect to the events which have recently taken place, and which are the immediate cause of your address, you will not, I am sure, expect that I should enter into any detail or explanation. Suffice it to say, that I do not feel myself, in the slightest degree, personally aggrieved by anything that has taken place. The question of who shall be the ministers of this country at this period is one of so much importance, and pregnant, possibly, with such serious consequences, that any considerations connected with it personally affecting an individual, whatever may be his rank, station, or talents, sink in comparison into utter

nothingness and insignificance. You have mentioned in your address the Act for the better representation of the people in Parliament ; and I entirely concur with your observations on the subject. After many years of apprehension, of doubt, and of more than doubt, whether it would be prudent and expedient to make so large and sudden an alteration, I deemed it to be my duty to promote and support that measure, because I felt it to be demanded by a great majority of the respectability and intelligence of the community. At the same time it is a very rapid and extensive change, and rapid and extensive changes in human affairs can never be regarded without uneasiness and anxiety. It gives to the people at large much greater power than they before possessed ; and the resolution of the question whether power has been wisely confided depends entirely upon the manner in which it is employed, and the effects which it produces. The people, as well as kings and ministers, are responsible to God and to man, in heaven and on earth, here and hereafter, for the exercise of the power committed to their charge, and if any of them are tempted to abuse it, depend upon it in this age of intelligence and inquiry they will not long be able to retain an authority of which they prove themselves to be unworthy. The cautious and temperate tone of this address is to me a sufficient proof and guarantee that the portion of political power which is placed in your hands will be exercised with temper, circumspection, moderation, and justice. It is undoubtedly true, as stated in your address, that it was the intention of myself and colleagues, if we had remained in office, to have proposed such reformatations both in the ecclesiastical and civil departments of the State as appear to be demanded by existing defects. You are all doubtless aware that a controversy has lately been carried on between men of great eminence and weight in the country upon the subject of the progress of reformation, whether it should be slow or fast, whether much or little should be proposed in the next session of Parliament. I can only say for myself, that—I know not whether it should have been considered much, or whether it should have been considered little,—I should have been for bringing forward as much as was sufficient, as much as would have remedied the most pressing evils, as much as could have been digested and matured, as much as under the circumstances it could be considered safe, prudent, and practicable to effect. Gentlemen, I am much gratified by the expression of confidence which is contained in the last paragraph of your address. I shall strenuously endeavour to deserve it. I shall persevere in the course which I have hitherto invariably held. I shall support such alterations as appear to me to be well founded and likely to be beneficial. It will be my anxious desire to remove every grievance, and even every inconvenience, which may press upon any portion of his Majesty's subjects, either in their civil or in their religious capacity, either as citizens of the State or as members of any particular sect—to extend and enlarge the institutions of the country, so as to render them commensurate with its increasing numbers, instruction, and in-

telligence—to enable them, as far as it is consistent with human nature, to comprehend within their scope all classes and conditions of men—and to insure their permanence by freeing them from reproach, and rendering them more powerful and efficient for those purposes which they are intended to promote.”

The *Times* reprinted this speech, commending its moderation and discretion, in not explaining or confirming any of the rumours afloat regarding the late events, and advocating the propriety of giving the new Administration, if one should be formed, a fair trial. The Duke told Greville that “no man could have acted more like a gentleman and a man of honour than Melbourne did ; and that his opinion of him was greatly raised.”¹ Yet the Clerk of the Council does not scruple to say that “Melbourne could not have given an exact account of what had passed (at Brighton), and that if he had told *all*, his colleagues would probably have thought he had abandoned their interests.”² He represents Duncannon as out of temper with his brother-in-law for condoning, as he thought he had done in his speech at Melbourne, the affront put upon the Liberal party by their summary ejection from power ; and imagines that he so far prevailed by his remonstrances as to induce the ex-Premier to change his tone when replying a week later to an address from Derby. The terms of the latter speech best confute the charge :—

“I thank you, gentlemen, cordially for this address—I thank you for the sentiments which it expresses—I thank you for the spirit which it breathes—I thank you for its prudence, temperance, and wisdom. With respect to the recent public events which are the immediate cause of your doing me the honour to meet me here upon the present occasion, you are all well aware that the death of the late Earl Spencer deprived us, at one blow, of our leader in the House of Commons and of our Chancellor of the Exchequer. You are all well aware that when the Government was constituted in its present form in July last, it was mainly grounded upon the weight and influence possessed by Lord Althorp (now Earl Spencer) in the Lower House of Parliament ; and allow me here for one moment to say that in nothing did that House of Commons, which possesses many and just claims to the public confidence and esteem, display a more enlightened regard for the public interest, or a more clear and sagacious insight into character, than in duly appreciating the manly integrity, the inflexible honesty, the straightforward sense and the noble simplicity which belong to and distinguish my noble friend ; and the merit of that House, in attaching itself as it did to him, as their guide and leader, is, in my view, greatly increased by the absence of those more specious and splendid qualities which have been generally supposed to be absolutely necessary for the conduct of public affairs in large popular assemblies. Upon this event taking place, with the results which I have already

¹ Memoirs, November 28th, 1834, iii. p. 164.

² *Ibid.*, December 6th, 1834, iii. pp. 166 and 170.

stated, it became my duty to take his Majesty's pleasure as to whether he would command me to make arrangements for filling up the vacancies which have been thus occasioned, and his Majesty was pleased to come to the determination that he would not impose upon me that duty, but would resort to other advisers. This is the short and simple statement of the facts which have actually taken place. You will observe that in making these statements, I am revealing no secrets ; they are necessarily evident and public of themselves, because they rest upon facts which are publicly known to have taken place upon the death of Lord Spencer, and upon the dismissal of the late administration and the appointment of another in its place. I owe it here to as gracious a Sovereign as ever minister had the honour and satisfaction of serving, to declare that in coming to this determination I believe his Majesty to have intended no personal slight to any man. It was a decision of great public importance, and therefore to be made on public grounds alone. You will observe that his Majesty would not have discharged his duty, if he had permitted personal considerations, or a respect to personal feelings, to have influenced him at such a crisis. An event of this magnitude, taking place in this manner, suddenly, unexpectedly, in the midst of the vacation, when the public mind was, as I believe, in a state of perfect contentment and repose, necessarily produced a great and immediate general sensation, and, as was to be expected, every rumour was caught at, reports were fabricated, guess and conjecture were resorted to, for the purpose of giving a narrative and explanation of the circumstances which had taken place. It is in the nature of a public press, and I therefore do not complain of it, that its conductors, in order to gratify the curiosity of their readers, and to advance the interests of the particular political parties to which they are attached, should resort to invention, and assertion, and should seize almost upon any means within their reach, which could enable them to profess to furnish information of what took place in the audiences with which I was honoured by his Majesty at Brighton. I may be misled by my own particular feelings, but I think that they have somewhat, in the present instance, exceeded the latitude and licence which ought always to be allowed them. As far as I have read those statements and representations they are all erroneous and not to be relied upon ; the facts which they assert are for the most part entirely false and without foundation ; and where there is any admixture of truth, it is so disguised and perverted, so mutilated and imperfect, so altered by the addition of fiction, and so divested of limitation and qualification, as to be almost more calculated to deceive and mislead even than falsehood itself. It has been affirmed, and that in publications of weight and authority, that the late Cabinet was dissolved, not by the determination of his Majesty, but its own internal divisions ; that there existed such dissentient and contradictory opinions as must necessarily have led to its early, if not its immediate, dissolution. I seize this opportunity of giving to this assertion a clear, distinct, emphatic denial. There were in that

Cabinet shades of opinion, as there always must be amongst men who think and act freely and conscientiously ; but there was no such difference of opinion upon great impending public measures as was likely to interfere with the harmonious and united action of that Administration. It would detain me too long, and my strength would hardly suffice, if I were to enter, in any detail, into the causes of the late events. You will not consider me as employing the language of complaint and discontent, but rather that of friendly admonition and advice, if I enumerate amongst them the want of confidence which has often been expressed in quarters from which we expected support,—the strong condemnation which has been pronounced upon some of our measures, which I conceive to have been absolutely necessary,—the violent and subversive opinions which have been declared, and particularly the bitter hostility and ulterior designs against the Established Church, which have been openly avowed by several classes and bodies of the Dissenters. When I mention this last opinion, I beg leave to say that I do not condemn those who conscientiously entertain it. It is not my opinion ; but I mention it now with reference to its actual effect upon the course of public affairs. These sentiments and this conduct occasioned great alarm in high and powerful quarters ; they terrified the timid, they repelled from us the wavering, they rallied men around the institutions which they conceived to be attacked, and they gave life, spirit, and courage, to our political adversaries, who, you will recollect, after all, form a very large and powerful party in this country—a party powerful in number, powerful in property, powerful in rank and station, and allow me to add, a party of a very decided, tenacious, unyielding and uncompromising character. You, I know, are stronger than they are ; you are strong in sense and spirit ; you are strong in reason and justice, in instruction and inquiry, in the general sympathy and fellow feeling of the community ; but you are not strong enough to concede these advantages to your opponents, whilst you subject yourselves to the weakness which arises from division, dissension, and discord. Some observation is made in this address upon the supposed delay of the late Government in bringing forward measures of reformation. I know that this has been made a fruitful topic of public animadversion. I think, however, there has been some misapprehension upon this subject, and I must in justice say, that if there had been delay, I know not that I could have accepted for it that excuse and apology which is offered in the present address. I say nothing of ecclesiastical reformation ; but with respect to legal, commercial, and even municipal reformation, I cannot in fairness say that measures of that character would have met with the obstacles to which allusion is made. The questions, I presume, which are supposed to be unnecessarily procrastinated, are those of the united Church of England and Ireland, and of the Municipal Corporations. The first is a great, important, and most difficult question ; no step could be taken upon it until full and accurate information had been obtained upon the actual state of religion and the religious estab-

lishments in that country. Means had been taken, as you well know, to obtain that information in the most ample and satisfactory manner, and when once that information has been obtained, no further delay would have taken place in framing upon it such a measure as would have amended obvious and indefensible errors, and have tended to the strengthening and promoting the Protestant religion in that part of his Majesty's dominions. The same observation applies to the second subject. In the Municipal Corporations nothing could be done until a complete examination into their actual state had taken place, and until the report of the Commission charged with this duty had been made and received by the Government. There is no subject upon which I feel a more anxious interest ; there is none which more urgently demands the serious consideration of Parliament. I do not mean to speak with either disrespect or severity of the persons who compose those Corporations : I believe in many instances they have acted with integrity ; and where they have erred their errors are to be attributed to their having been subjected to a temptation which human nature cannot resist—the temptation of irresponsible and unexamined power. Great abuses have, I believe, been discovered ; but the abuses with respect to property are as nothing compared to the social evil of which the Corporations, as at present constituted, are the origin and the cause. As Secretary of State I have had experience of their effects, and in my opinion the discord, the dissension, the sedition, the jealousy, enmity and heartburnings which they create and nourish, are the principal obstacles to the due enforcement of the law and the steady maintenance of the public tranquillity. It would be an insult, which I will not offer to you, if I were to recommend you to confine yourselves to constitutional objects and constitutional means. Such I know to be your principles and intentions. All that you wish to effect, all that ought to be effected, may be safely brought about by legal and orderly proceedings. If, which may God avert and forefend, discord and dissension should unhappily arise between any of the branches of the legislature, or any of the parts which compose the body politic of this country ; if they should depart from that agreement and coherence in which they ought to act harmoniously and cordially for the benefit and advantage of the whole, depend upon it, that party, whichever it may be, which first exceeds the limits of its legal and constitutional jurisdiction, and particularly that party which first resorts to violence, injustice, cruelty, persecution, will ultimately fail in the contest, and will diminish and curtail that power and authority which it has sought unwarrantably, injuriously, iniquitously to increase and extend."

Eager and angry partisanship still bubbled over with wrath at the late Premier's attitude and tone. He did not talk like a man who had been turned out unexpectedly and without cause. He was not, it was murmured and muttered, up to the mark of leadership of the popular party. Had it been Durham, how he would have fumed and threatened. Even among colleagues there were some whose vexation could

not help finding vent in friendly sarcasm at his fine-gentlemanly airs of phlegm. All this he simply laughed at as childish petulance or irrational rhodomontade. In his mind the case was clear, one of dignified reticence too plain for controversy. The Liberal party had been in power four years by the will of the nation and the acquiescence of the King. His Majesty had withdrawn his acquiescence, suddenly conceiving the nation to have changed its mind. If it had, the Whigs ought to be out of office ; and whoever meant the contrary meant disloyalty to parliamentary government. So did not he ; and if the House of Commons when it assembled should vote approval of the conduct of the King, he for one felt bound to obey that decision. But if Parliament, as he believed, would declare that William IV. had made an egregious blunder, the Liberal party would return to power lawfully and inevitably, and in that case the fewer hard things said in the meantime the better. As for personal ill-usage, he utterly disdained complaint. He had never sought the Premiership ; had never schemed or sighed for it ; had never been suspected of putting himself forward as a competitor for its attainment. But having been named by the King, accepted by the party, and supported by the House of Commons, it was not for him to scold or brawl because a weak and whimsical prince imagined that he knew best how little the party cared for their chief or how much the country wanted to be rid of him. If either were true, how unworthy and undignified would it be in him to contest the matter. The existing House of Commons had in no instance rejected his advice or intimated their distrust of him ; the House of Commons about to be elected might or might not indicate its wish to have another Premier. But the first quality of fitness to hold the Treasurer's staff was to show that you did not think it worth stooping for. Let any one do so that liked ; so would not he. His calm and good-humoured silence during the three months that succeeded was the truest and highest wisdom ; and did more to confirm his position in the mind of thinking men, and to disarm jealousy and antipathy in the breasts of others, than all the harangues faction could have uttered in his favour. Politically, his reserve was the clear course of a consistent, well-read, and thoughtful statesman ; personally, it was the only course, under the circumstances, that became a high-minded gentleman. Its policy was plain enough to the far-sighted, though not manifest to the vulgar. If he was not again to be called to supreme power, the sooner his brief possession of the Premiership was forgotten the pleasanter ; and if he was to be recalled to the royal closet, the less of humiliation his irritable master had to forget the greater would be his chance of regaining confidence and getting rid of difficulties and prejudices in the details of rule.

Sir Robert Peel made his first offer to Mr. Stanley and his seceding friends, which being declined, he proceeded at once to constitute the administration out of the prominent members of his own party, irrespective of the prejudices and resentments which past divisions amongst them had caused. Lord Haddington, a bosom friend of

Canning, was made Viceroy of Ireland, and Sir Edward Knatchbull, a leader of the mutiny which had overthrown the Duke in 1830, entered the Cabinet as Paymaster of the Forces. It may be that there really was no great room for choice in the colour of the materials of which the new Government was to be composed ; but the absence of new men of mark or proved ability created necessarily the impression that, after four years of progress and organic change, the Executive was about to revert substantially to what it had been before. Practically this decided the great issue about to be left to the new constituency.

The Seceders had not yet actually quarrelled with Melbourne, from whom in fact they differed on one point of legislation only. Lord Auckland in his gossiping letters of December says : " I am glad to hear that Stanley met Melbourne at Trentham, and that there was all cordiality and good-fellowship between them " ; and in the following week he says : " Melbourne passed through town well and in good spirits on his way to Goodwood," where he was to spend the Christmas.¹ The Duke of Richmond had on quitting office taken his seat on the cross benches in the Lords, and he continued to occupy the same position for several years after.

Under the auspices of Lord Durham, an election committee sat to promote the return of candidates disposed to favour his pretensions to leadership. Charles Buller, Ward, Grote, Duncombe, Warburton, and others adhered to his standard, on which they were prepared to display, as soon as might be deemed prudent, household suffrage, ballot, and Church reform. Their doctrine was that the Court had been tempted by want of resolution to cashier the late Cabinet ; and that the country was ready to elect a new House of Commons with a Liberal majority strong enough to mark a new point of departure on the path of democratic progress. The old chiefs must be got rid of, and younger men placed in their room. These, on the other hand, estimated very differently the tendencies of the time. They believed that a powerful reaction had set in, difficult to withstand, and only possible with great prudence and caution to surmount. To them the notion of a Durham administration seemed too chimerical to be seriously deprecated ; but they recognised the vigour, earnestness, and talent of the younger politicians who clustered round the ambitious Earl, and cheerfully aided them in the contest they were about to fight on the extreme left of the Liberal line. By some of the older members of the party this co-operation excited jealousy ; and distrust was here and there felt as to how far the former chief of the Administration might be prevailed upon to yield pretensions or principles. In answer to inquiries on this head, towards the close of December, Melbourne wrote from Goodwood to Spring Rice :—

" I was much rejoiced to hear so good an account of your election prospects. I hope they continue to be of the same character. I have

¹ December 11th and 19th, 1834.

not taken much cognisance of what is going on at Cleveland Row, despairing of being able to manage or control. The fact is that these matters are in the hands of those who from the commencement of the late administration pursued the system which necessarily led to its downfall. I thought it my duty, both to the King and to that part of the country which had supported us, to do my utmost to keep the Government or any part of it as long as possible. We now stand upon new ground, and if ever called upon again, I have a right to consider afresh upon what principles and with whom as associates I will re-engage in the public service."

To Lord Lansdowne he wrote somewhat later :—

"I should have liked very much to come to you from Goodwood, but my brother arrived in town, which made me hurry up. If I can arrange it, I should wish very much to come and see you before the meeting of Parliament; this cannot now take place until the end of February at soonest. Political affairs assume a serious aspect. These appeals from the King to the people against the existing House of Commons can only be justified by decisive success. If the Ministry who tries it fails, they lay the Crown prostrate at the feet of the majority. All those of our side who concern themselves in the elections say that they will go much against the Ministry, and much in favour of the Radical party, who, as I am told, are conducting themselves for the present with judgment and moderation. You cannot, I am sure, be doing otherwise than thinking seriously, constantly, and anxiously upon the course which is to be pursued. But nothing can be definitely settled until we see the character and complexion of the new House of Commons, upon which all depends."¹

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHIEF OF OPPOSITION.

Parliament of 1835—Contest for the Speakership—Confidential correspondence—Personal characteristics—The Peel Administration overthrown.

A NEW purpose was already formed within the breast of Melbourne. He had now a motive to seek power he had never had before. If it had never come he would have lived on contentedly without it; but having been Prime Minister, and having been summarily and arbitrarily dismissed, he was resolved to try whether he could not reverse the decree, and reassert once for all the old Whig principle that without the assent of Parliament, Government in England there should not be.

The first days of the opening year were occupied with the general

¹ From South Street, December 29th, 1834, MS.

election. The City returned four Liberals, including the Governor of the Bank ; the lowest on the list being fourteen hundred ahead of the highest Conservative. In the whole metropolis there was not a single ministerialist. Dublin and Edinburgh, Glasgow and Coventry, Newcastle and Birmingham, Manchester and Salford, Sheffield and Wolverhampton pronounced an equally emphatic condemnation of the recent change of Ministry, and many other manufacturing and commercial towns did the same. On the other hand, the English and Welsh counties for the most part chose supporters of Sir Robert Peel.

On all sides Melbourne was pressed to make what a Spaniard would have called a *pronunciamiento* ; what Durham called unfurling a new flag ; what Tom Duncombe called showing what trumps he held. This was exactly what Melbourne would not do. Reflection, and conference with the few whose judgment really influenced his own, confirmed him in the conviction that the thing worth doing, before and above all other things, was to reverse the proceeding of the 14th of November, whereby a misguided sovereign had been betrayed into an error which, if not retrieved betimes, would lead him and his house to irretrievable ruin. He did not want any personal redress, for he felt no resentment. He did not wish for democratic triumph over misjudging royalty, for he was to the core a Whig. He thought the situation far too critical for splashy or speculative explanations. New circumstances and new exigencies would require the framing of new measures ; but he saw no necessity for hoisting new party banners, and he thought the first duty and the best policy was simply to repel what he deemed an unconstitutional exercise of power, by inviting Parliament to tell the Crown its nominees did not possess their confidence, and that they would not have men so appointed to rule over them. Lighter heads took very different views. Various sections wished for a new point of departure in the path of organic reform ; Whig country gentlemen like Mr. Robert Gordon held out hopes on the hustings that the malt tax would be swept away ; and May Fair Radicals like Hobhouse wished it to be understood that their junction with the Whigs last year had been conditional on a change of system in Ireland, guarantees for which they had exacted and were prepared now to enforce. Melbourne was not surprised that some of his old colleagues should be annoyed at such speeches ; but he had in his mental composition what few of them had in theirs, that which in the great Stadholder was called phlegm ; without which he could never have accomplished the definite aim on which he had made up his mind. He had as little notion of being bullied by reckless adherents into pretending acquiescence in their assertions as he had of quarrelling with them for their folly. In private he rated them soundly for their absurdities ; in public he stared with an amused air at any one who tried to identify him with them.

"Hobhouse says that his speech is misreported as it stands ; some statements in it are erroneous ; and those which are correct are made

in such a manner as to produce a false impression. With respect to the Coercion Bill, it was settled on the very formation of the late Government that the three first clauses were to be abandoned. This is all that was said upon the subject, and they certainly were not given up, as his speech would imply, at his suggestion, or rather on his demand. But what can be done? He has been spoken to upon the subject, but says that the whole report is incorrect, that you cannot set one part of it right without admitting the rest. Speaking confidentially, I should fear that it is not so very different from what he really said, and that therefore it will not do to contradict nor of course to retract it.

"Men, when they speak upon such delicate subjects, should give themselves the trouble to beware that the report of what they say should be correct. Gordon wrote to me almost immediately, expressing his regret for the speech he had made at Cricklade, admitting that it went much too far, and attributing his having done so to the extreme excitement under which he spoke. It is true that he had often represented to me strongly the necessity of repealing the malt tax; but it is not true that I had given such a notion the least countenance, or encouraged him to expect that it would be done, whereas certainly the speech leaves it to be inferred, if it does not positively affirm, that I had agreed to the measure."¹

The final result of the general election reached him at Brocket before the middle of January. Without the Seceders a majority variously estimated at from five-and-twenty to forty had been returned, pledged to oppose the Peel Administration. The demand instantly arose that on their assembling they should assert their predominance by naming a new Speaker. Who was likely to concentrate with fewest defections the strength of the Liberal party? Lansdowne wrote to Spring Rice:—

"I conclude everybody will be agreed that it would be highly inexpedient to disturb the present Speaker without a certainty of success. I am quite satisfied from all the circumstances attending the present moment that certainty would be more within reach in the event of your being the candidate than in that of any other person, and might be calculated without difficulty when the season for determination comes; neither can there be any sufficient reason why, if the present inclination of your mind is confirmed on reflection (and I feel the weight of all the considerations to which you refer), you should not avail yourself of what would at any time be an honourable distinction, and which would come to you enhanced by the peculiarity of the case, the free choice of the House, and its being consistent with your political principles and connections. I will not conceal from you that I should consider this change in your situation, though I know it would be attended with none in your public views, as a political and personal loss. . . . But it is impossible to be useful in all senses,

¹ From South Street, January 30th, 1835, MS.

and I am far from adverting to this because I think it should affect your decision, but because I am unwilling to withhold from you a thought that occurs to me.”¹

On the same day Melbourne wrote :—

“I received yours of the 13th instant with the inclosure yesterday at Brocket Hall. I should have answered it by return of post, but as I expected Mulgrave down from London, and as he had been consulting with some of our friends upon this very subject, I thought it better to delay replying to you until after I had seen him. I had before heard that you would not be disinclined to undertake the office of Speaker ; and I had already written to John Russell to say that if that were your mind it appeared to me both that your claims upon the party and your own qualifications were such as at once to supersede those of any other person. I continue entirely of that opinion. Whether you act prudently or not in coming to this conclusion, it is for yourself to determine ; that depends so much upon one's own views and feelings, that it is impossible for one man to decide for another on such a question. There is one point of view in which I certainly deeply regret it, and that is, when I consider that it involves the loss of your active service and assistance in the House of Commons, and I must feel this the more heavily from the general concurrence of our opinions, and because I am no more prepared than yourself to go to that extent of change to which many have most unwisely and unnecessarily thought proper to pledge themselves.”²

Spencer, Holland, Palmerston, and Auckland indicated a like preference ; “and in all the communications he had held regarding the Speakership, Earl Grey uniformly expressed his opinion that his claims were superior to those of any other candidate, whoever he might be.”³ A numerous section, however, of the more advanced politicians leaned rather to the nomination of Abercromby. The suggestion of his name originated, not as was frequently supposed with the Duke of Devonshire or Lord Durham, but with Lord John Russell. Two days after their dismissal in November, Melbourne agreed with the new leader that Abercromby should be asked if he would take the Speakership. He was not then aware that Spring Rice desired the office. The offer was neither accepted nor refused. Some time after Abercromby wrote to Melbourne declining. On this Lord John communicated confidentially with Spring Rice and Palmerston, but at the time to no one else.⁴ It was generally supposed that Lord John favoured the selection of Abercromby and the Radical press daily insisted on his preferential worthiness for the distinguished post, and deprecated the nomination of his competitor as a man less advanced in Liberalism. Paragraphs appeared ascribing the counter movement to O'Connell's resentment against his chief antagonist in the Repeal

¹ From Bowood, January 16th, 1835, MS.

² From Panshanger, January 16th, 1835, MS.

³ Earl Grey to T. S. Rice, February 6th, 1835, MS.

⁴ Subsequent letter from Woburn, February 4th, 1835, MS.

debate of April 1834 ; but the contrary appears from the report of an election speech, in which he declared that "he would cheerfully and willingly vote for Mr. Rice were he proposed for the situation of Speaker."

While matters were in doubt a letter from Lord John found its way into print expressing his readiness to support Abercromby. Spring Rice, disappointed and offended, wrote asking if the preference must not be recognised as an indication that men of moderate opinions were henceforth to be set aside, whatever their services or standing might be. Lord John replied :—

"I have received your letter with great concern. But as I am going to Bowood on Tuesday, I can there talk the matter over with Lord Lansdowne. I will say little more at present. Let me assure you, however, that while I shall feel myself bound to attend to your wishes, unless the strongest interests of the country intervene, I see no such danger of your becoming singular and obnoxious, as you seem to apprehend. On the contrary, I look to you for advice and counsel, that we might act in all things together, and keep aloof from any organic changes which might be dangerous to the constitution."¹

To make mischief among comrades, is part of the every-day tactics, at all times, of an opposite party. On the first mention of Abercromby's name as a candidate for the chair, the ministerial organs offered their condolence to Spring Rice, for being unceremoniously thrown overboard by the new leader of Opposition, either to propitiate O'Connell, who was said to be implacable in his enmity, or to please the Duke of Devonshire, of whose rental Abercromby had for some years acted as auditor. There can be little doubt that these taunts and sneers, kept up day after day in every variety of phrase, were not wholly without effect. Lord Limerick did not conceal his indignation at his son-in-law being jockeyed, as he supposed, and numerous allusions in private correspondence at the time betrayed the same suspicion of some species of intrigue. A frank and confidential letter to Spring Rice himself from Lord John early in January gives the true history of the transaction, and shows how groundless were these insinuations :—

"On the dissolution of the late Ministry I asked Abercromby whether he was disposed to accept the Speakership if Sutton left the chair. He did not seem disinclined, but has since expressed his intention not to accept. I hope he has not finally determined. But at all events I think we ought not to elect Sutton after his late conduct. I shall be very glad to hear from you on the subject, and I hope you will warn any new members you see against pledging themselves to Sutton. But supposing Abercromby to decline, who is the fittest man? I should say either C. Ferguson or Bonham Carter ; but I have no decided opinion."²

¹ From Lord John Russell, January 18th, 1835, MS.

² From Torquay, January 9th, 1835, MS.

Earl Spencer could not refuse his sympathy and advice to old friends because he was determined to keep aloof from the fray, and his obligations to the former Secretary of the Treasury were too many and too recent to be forgotten.

"I only got your letter last night, or I would have answered it before, having no difficulty or doubt about how it was to be answered. If Abercromby had been in the field, there might have been some embarrassment, but, he being out of the way, I can conceive no one whose claim upon the whole Liberal party is so great as yours. I am surprised, I own, that you should choose to lower yourself to so fameless an office as that of Speaker, standing as high as you do at the present time. But if that is your choice no one else can have anything to say against it. The only objection any man could make to you is that you have too much sense to carry on the humbug of the chair without occasionally laughing; for though a necessary humbug, still it is a humbug. Addington and Abbot made better Speakers than Sutton, because they had less sense, and Lord Grenville made a much worse one, I believe, because he had more. You are clearly the man who will combine the greatest amount of support of any one who can be proposed."¹

The result of the conference at Bowood was that Lord John wrote as follows :—

"After the letters from Althorp and Melbourne which you have sent to Lord Lansdowne, and your reply to me, I can have no longer any doubt in saying that your election to the chair will have all the support I can give. I should offer to propose you, but that I think Abercromby a better person, and I advise you to write to him immediately, quoting, if you please, my opinion to this effect. At the same time, I do not withdraw a grain of the regret which your separation from active politics does and will cause me. I shall write to Ebrington and two or three more without delay."²

Up to this time Spring Rice uniformly began his letters to Lansdowne "My dear Lord." His friend grew tired of the formality, and concluded an epistle of more than ordinary confidence and kindness with a playful expression of jealousy, and a "hope that he would in future mend his ways." The rejoinder began—

"MY DEAR LANSDOWNE,—Is this what you meant by amending my ways? I wish all reforms were as agreeable and as easy, as one which at your desire marks as sincere and earnest an attachment as one man can feel towards another. If, as you say, you were jealous of me, I shall expect my wife and children to be jealous next, for outside the very inmost circle, there is no one to whose counsel and efficient friendship I owe so much as to yours, and believe me in warm attachment to you it is repaid. As usual, you greatly over-estimate me under the peculiar circumstances of the present moment. I cannot for the life of

¹ From Wiseton, January 18th, 1835, MS.

² From Bowood, January 22nd, 1835, MS.

me cry Durham and *Real* Reform, and I am sure I would not have had self-control enough to avoid a regular fight with some of those among whom we shall have to sit."

After regretting the alienation of Stanley, and hoping to be instrumental in the reconciliation of those who should never have parted, he apologizes for inclosing a letter from Macaulay which spoke confidently of his future position as a leader of their party. The letter concludes with the following:—"We see a good deal here of the Duchess of Kent and our future queen. I never saw a child who had more the appearance of being naturally brought up."¹

To Spring Rice Melbourne wrote on the 21st:—

"The copy of your letter to Lord Spencer with which you furnished me I sent to Duncannon, and therefore I have it not to refer to; but if I recollect its contents aright, I gathered from them that you would not be inclined to urge your wishes if Abercromby should consent to be proposed for the chair of the House of Commons. I think it right to tell you that, under this impression, and in consequence of the strongest possible representations received from many of our friends, I have thought it right to press again upon Abercromby, the propriety of reconsidering his determination. The feeling expressed upon this subject was so strong that I could not resist it. I have little expectation that he will be inclined to alter his resolution, and in that case I have already told you that it is my strong opinion that you should be brought forward as our candidate.

"Believe me,

"Yours ever faithfully, etc., etc."

"P.S. The feeling amongst our friends to which I have adverted above, was expressed positively in favour of Abercromby in the first instance, and without reference to you or any other person who might otherwise be thought of."²

Lansdowne wrote on the same day:—

"Since I wrote to you John Russell arrived here, and we have spent much time in talking over the subject of our correspondence and other public matters. I feel myself forced to the conclusion, and turning the question over in every way, that if the situation to which you have so strong a claim is placed within your reach, and you determine upon taking it, it will not be possible to make an Administration out of the materials of the late Government, or, indeed, to keep its elements together as a party independent of office. What the effects of this may be under present circumstances, or what resources may be found for supplying the vacancy which the inevitable fall of this Government will create, you can judge at least as well as I can, but you will feel with me that it is necessary to look at all the consequences of any important step that is taken at the present crisis. I conclude John Russell will write to you himself to-day, but I could not avoid stating

¹ Letter to Lord Lansdowne, Hastings, January 20th, 1835, MS.

² From Panshanger, January 21st, 1835, MS.

the whole view that I take of the case after considering it with him in all its bearings. Hobhouse's Nottingham speech increased difficulties by the offence I know it has given to some and is calculated to give to others. Indeed I do not understand it as a statement of facts."¹

Lord John was equally frank and friendly :—

"I am very sorry to put any bar in the way of any wishes of yours, but after a long conversation with Lord Lansdowne I think it right to lay before you the following considerations. The Whig party has of late been much weakened by the secession of Stanley and Graham. It has been obliged to bear the loss of Macaulay and R. Grant. Your talents for business, for council, for parliamentary debate, make you of inestimable consequence to the party now deprived, besides other losses, of Althorp in the House of Commons. To come to particulars, Lord Lansdowne looks upon you as the member of the House most capable from power and inclination of representing his opinions, and he doubts whether it be possible to construct the Administration on principles similar to the last if you cannot form part of the arrangement. My own feelings are not very different. I have no disposition to be towed out to sea farther than the late Ministry were inclined to go. I know not what I may find myself asked to do, without having a friend and colleague to join me in resistance. Of course I would then decline any longer acting with the party, but this is not a remedy I should like to apply. I feel how unpleasant it is to state these reasons to you; but Lord Lansdowne and I am both of us too much impressed with their importance to conceal them from you. Until I received your letter I was entirely ignorant of your wishes. Carter and Ferguson were only mentioned by me as themes to comment upon. I believe Bernal would be a better candidate than either. But I have no hesitation in stating that you would be infinitely more acceptable to the great majority of the House than any of the three. Manners Sutton it is quite clear must not be allowed to walk over. Having stated these reflections, I wish you seriously to consider them, and let me know your decision as soon as possible."²

Stanley on the day following wrote :—

"Your communication on the subject of the Speaker's chair is almost, if not quite, the first I have heard from any one upon the subject; and I therefore have more difficulty in answering you than I should have had with more knowledge of the facts and of the views and opinions of other parties; but such as my opinion is, I will not hesitate to give it you frankly and plainly, and trust to your friendship and candour not to misinterpret me. I fully enter into the various motives stated in your letter to Althorp which at the present moment naturally tend to strengthen your former wish to be placed in the chair; and I own that I was a good deal surprised to find from John Russell's note that your wish had not been more generally

¹ Private and confidential from Bowood to T. S. Rice, January 21st, 1835, MS.

² From Bowood, January 21st, 1835, MS.

made known to your late colleagues, after the explanation which took place on your acceptance of the Colonial Office : that it was not clear, or John Russell could not have made the suggestion which he did. You sacrificed your own views for the purpose of strengthening Lord Grey's Government, and had therefore, and as I conceive have, a right to look for their co-operation when your acceptance of a Cabinet office is not, as it was then, essential to them. They must know also that as a mere party question your name would give them infinitely more strength than either of those who were suggested to you, probably more than any that could be suggested ; and I think it probable, without the least flattery, that from personal regard and private friendship, as well as from public character and station, you would unite in your favour a greater number of votes apart from party considerations than any other name in the House. I will add frankly that for myself there is no one in whose favour I should give a more cordial or a more conscientious vote. But with all this, I am bound to say I wish it could be that you should not be brought forward, now at least, unless Manners Sutton should retire. I am perhaps not sufficiently acquainted with all the facts of the case, but I own I cannot bring myself to think that the fact of his having acted (after the dissolution of the late Government, and not in the discharge of any of his official duties) even zealously, if you will, in furtherance of the principles which we know him to profess can of itself be a sufficient reason to justify us who, knowing his principles, pressed him to remain in his situation, in now turning round and rejecting him. This being my opinion, my present strong impression is that if he should again be brought forward as a candidate I should feel myself bound to support him against any new man ; and I need not, I am sure, say that I should do so with the most unfeigned reluctance if you were his competitor. I think I can say with at least equal strength that my inclination and my judgment would alike lead me to support your claims in opposition to those of any untried man of either party, either now or whenever Manners Sutton may resign ; and forgive me if I say that I think it would be more honourable and more agreeable to yourself to owe your election to the general opinion of the House that you were the fittest person for the office, than to a party movement for the purpose of trying at the earliest possible opportunity the relative strength of the Government and the Opposition. I know not whether you will share in this feeling or whether you will concur in the general view which I take, but I am sure you will give me credit for the sincerity of my motives, and not attribute the line I am disposed to take to any lukewarmness of regard towards yourself, on the contrary, I feel satisfied that it would be the line which would be the best calculated to promote your ultimate object, and that in the manner the most satisfactory to yourself. I need not say that all I have written is written confidentially and intended for yourself alone."¹

¹ Private and confidential from Knowsley, January 22nd, 1835, MS.

Another letter followed from his greatest friend :—

“I need scarcely say that I had not received your inclosures from Melbourne and Spencer when I wrote yesterday. I have shown them to John Russell, and lose no time in returning them. Although I can see nothing (I wish I could) to alter our view of the matter, there can be but one feeling amongst your friends, personal and political, that your wishes should govern their conduct, and so thinks John Russell, with whom I have talked it all over again this morning. His views are moderate and rational, but by whom is he to be supported in them? My friend Auckland, with many excellent qualities, is a great deal too much disposed to bend to opinion, the extent and force of which he is prone to exaggerate both to himself and to others.”¹

To his surprise, Lord John found on the 23rd of January that things had taken a different turn :—

“On my arrival in town last night, I received a note from Melbourne informing me of his final application to Abercromby. What has happened to make him take this step I do not exactly know, but of course everything must be suspended, as you say, till A.’s answer arrives. I go to Brocket to-morrow, and to Woburn Abbey on Monday, to stay as long as I am allowed.”²

When Abercromby seemed to shrink from the contest, other names were suggested. Mr. Bernal was generally popular, and had had great experience of business in committee ; but he was a West India merchant, and the Whigs would have a country gentleman, or a jurist of high standing. Then there was Graham, who his old colleagues feared was likely to join their antagonists ; he would look the character to perfection, and in pomp of talk it would be difficult to find his equal. But it would be in vain to ask the party to unite in his favour : the attempt was not even made. More hopeless still would it have been to nominate Littleton, whose disastrous error of the previous session was still fresh in everybody’s recollection except Lord Wellesley’s and his own. These circumstances rendered any idea of the kind impossible. But this Littleton did not appear to feel. Duncannon had the disagreeable office of telling him the state of the case, while Melbourne wrote to his father-in-law.³

On the 27th Lord John wrote :—

“Melbourne, who is here, has heard nothing yet from A. having written to Edinburgh. Are you sure that Dan and his men would support you, West Briton as you are? In the meantime I send you a letter to which, if you care to be Speaker, I shall require an answer from your own chair. It was written the day I left Bowood.”⁴

On the 28th the same correspondent informed Spring Rice of Abercromby’s acceptance : “I know you will be very sorry ; but I cannot think you had so well chosen for yourself as your friends are able to

¹ From Bowood to T. S. Rice, January 23rd, 1835, MS.

² From Queen Street, January 24th, 1835, MS.

³ Lord Duncannon, from Amptill Park, January 26th, 1835.

⁴ From Woburn, January 27th, 1835, MS.

do." Spring Rice could only acquiesce in a decision which he felt to be approved of thoroughly, not only for the party's sake, but for his own, by his best friends. He was nevertheless mortified at the way in which his hopes and desires had been played with, as he imagined, by Melbourne; and he indicated not obscurely that he was disposed in his vexation to stand aloof. The date as published of Lord John's letter to Abercromby appearing to be the same as that on which he had written to him from Woburn, with Melbourne by his side, in which he still treated him as the probable candidate of the Whigs, was indeed hard to be understood, and he said plainly that he did not understand it. The formal letter of invitation was, in point of fact, written in London on the 29th, after Abercromby had promised to accept, and not at Woburn on the 27th, while his acceptance was still regarded as improbable. But Abercromby was given leave to modify any phrase he might deem important; and for some reason unexplained, he had put back the date two days, unconscious of what the change might imply, and Lord John first saw the alteration when he read it in the *Globe*.

"You use a very mild term, he added, when you speak of *reserve*. Had my letter been written on the 27th, I should have been guilty of treachery towards you; but when I wrote you on the 27th I was persuaded Abercromby would decline, and it was only on that view I sent you the letter. I am sorry you were kept in uncertainty, but you now know that I had nothing to do with it. I think Melbourne regretted it likewise, but having written again to Abercromby, he was obliged to stand to what he had written. I do not like to promise for another occasion, but this I may say, that I think your promotion to the Chair at present would have, to a great degree, separated Lord Lansdowne from the party, and in that case I should have begged to be considered as a single member of Parliament. Abercromby would not have taken my place, and the whole concern would have gone to pieces."¹

There was more balm in this than in a volume of common-place compliment. Nor was this all. Next day he wrote at greater length, and even more explicitly, enumerating every step of the transaction, from his own original suggestion in November, with accurate regard to dates and incidents.

On the morrow he again recapitulated the substance of the correspondence, and asked how could he have acted otherwise. Many had assured him that they thought Abercromby had a better chance than any one else. C. Wood gave that opinion decidedly. "But if not on the Speakership, what other question is there in which you should feel any estrangement from us? I say all this because I feel that if you do not assist us in council and debate I shall be obliged to call our friends together a fortnight after Parliament meets, and desire each man to find his own leader as he best can. I have stated all

¹ From Woburn, February 3rd, 1835, MS.

this to you very plainly, because I wish to continue on the most open and confidential terms with you, and I have no doubt you will meet it in the same spirit."¹ That Rice did so meet it the subsequent correspondence amply testifies. No word of irritation points to a suspicion of Melbourne having acted unworthily in the affair, and thenceforth the disappointed candidate co-operated loyally in promoting the success of his rival.

On the 30th Melbourne wrote fully explaining the history of the transaction :—

"You are probably already aware that Abercromby, upon receiving my letter and many others to the same effect, came up to town, as a speedy decision upon the question of the Chair was manifestly necessary. John Russell and myself also arrived here yesterday from Woburn. Upon the best information we could obtain, and the best consideration we could give to the subject, two conclusions appeared to us to be certain: the first, that in the present temper of our friends and supporters it was impossible to avoid taking steps to oppose the re-election of Sutton; and the second, that the question would, without doubt, be tried to the greatest advantage with Abercromby as the candidate. Great doubts are entertained whether it is possible to succeed against Sutton at all, and if this should upon further inquiry appear to be the probable result, feelings and passions may perhaps cool down, and men may be constrained to acquiesce in the course which would then undoubtedly be the most reasonable and politic. At present, however, there is no hope of conducting members to such a conclusion. It has therefore been determined that Abercromby should be declared a candidate, and that the most active means should be taken immediately to ascertain the opinions which exist upon the subject. I feel very much the force of your observation, that you wish you had been earlier informed of this possible contingency. I very much regret it, but for myself I really considered Abercromby's determination as quite final, and was only induced to renew the subject with him by the very strong and urgent solicitations to that effect which poured in upon me from all quarters. All your other remarks are correct, especially that it seems odd to force the office upon one friend who dislikes it and not to assist another who desires it. But you also say that success is the great object, and it does appear that of success Abercromby has the best chance."²

"I am much obliged for your letter in answer to mine. It is quite satisfactory. I do not suppose that all the Moderates will support Abercromby as they would have supported you. But others will be more eager, and Morpeth, I am told, said he could vote for none but A. or Sutton."³

On the same day Lord Russell's letter requesting Abercromby to serve, with his reply accepting, appeared in the morning papers.

¹ From Woburn, February 4th, 1835, MS.

² From South Street, January 30th, 1835, MS.

³ From Woburn, January 31st, 1835, MS.

Lord Limerick and other personal friends bitterly gave vent to their suspicions and their belief that the result had been compassed by intrigue.

The selected candidate thus intimated his feelings on the event to his late rival :—

“ I have been forced into a position which is in many respects distressing to me, and in no respect more than from the belief that the Chair, if attainable for either of us, would have been agreeable to you. I pretend to nothing unusually generous. I felt, when Sutton was last elected, that, in the peculiar situation in which I then was, the Chair would have been to me a double object. That failing, I not only discarded it from my mind because the reasons which influenced me two years ago no longer existed, and because I should very much prefer in these times doing my duty as a member of Parliament, to being removed from an active share in politics. With these feelings fixed in my mind, I steadily refused Melbourne and all other persons who applied to me. I did not yield until Melbourne found himself so pressed that he could not refuse to urge me to reconsider my decision, and then it was that I came to London in the hope that I might by communication with others escape from that which I wished to avoid. I found all I could say unavailing, and I fear that I can only account by the habit that had been acquired of saying that I should have been a good candidate for the popular party, by the fear that your admirable speech on the Repeal of the Union might influence some of your countrymen, and by the regret that so many would have felt in seeing you removed from the power of assisting your friends by your efficiency in debate. This is the view that has occurred to me, and all I can say is that I sincerely regret having been forced forward, and I should feel it more deeply if I did not secretly believe that all opposition to Sutton is vain (if he promises), after his being in possession of the office, with his experience, and with the opportunities he has had of cultivating the opinion of the House. If I was unexpectedly to succeed it would be a source of sincere regret to me. It would probably be the last chapter in my life, and not such a conclusion as I should desire. I do not mean to canvass or take any part myself, and I go back to Derbyshire by the mail to-night.”¹

Chief Justice Denman, knowing he could rely on the reticence of his old friend, whispered Spring Rice by post, “ Don’t you be proposed as Speaker. If I was an M.P. I would vote against you, since you are wanted for the thing, not the name. I have just been dining with the Chancellor at Serjeants’ Inn. He talked of three hundred sure Tory votes, and not more than two hundred and twenty Whigs.”² Such was Lord Lyndhurst’s way of talking, which those who knew him well did not take to be meant literally ; but the feeling of Lord Denman was expressed by many other friends with equal earnestness,

¹ A private letter from J. Abercromby to T. S. Rice, January 31st, 1835 (Fenton’s Hotel).

² From Lord Denman, January 30th, 1835, MS.

that Opposition could ill afford at such a moment to consign one of their most reliable debaters to silence, or, as Lord Auckland said, by putting him in the Chair, to put him on the shelf.

"I have heard from John Russell from Woburn on a still more important and delicate subject. Attempts have been making, as might be foreseen, to open much more confidential communication than I am sure is either desirable or safe in two different quarters which require the greatest caution. You will be glad to hear that he himself is disposed to resist them, and I have written to him in the strongest terms about it, as I think nothing would be so fatal as any entanglement with persons who have nothing in common with us, at least in ultimate objects. I have not time to copy any correspondence, but will show it you when we meet."¹

A rumour was in circulation that O'Connell had sent over three names for Speaker, one of which must be chosen to win his support. Lord John Russell stated that he did not believe a word of it; for Duncannon had told him that O'Connell had written to him to say that he would vote for anybody the party should put up.

Lord Spencer's clear and disinterested judgment weighed more with Melbourne than that of any other man. That he had seldom now the benefit of its daily aid was indeed an unceasing cause of regret. He never volunteered advice after he had laid aside the duties of a leader; but he was always ready to tell his friends who asked him what he thought on a particular question, or how he would himself act in their position. About the Speakership, Lord Grey had doubts; but he had none. He had himself supported Manners Sutton's re-election in the late Parliament; but in the recent changes he thought he had forfeited his claim to confidence by the part he had taken, and he thought the new Parliament had a right to place another man in the chair. "The question was one of policy. If the Liberal party were confident that their opposition to his election would be successful, he should say certainly that it would be a very beneficial measure to oppose it."² At length it grew obvious that some resolution must be come to, and made generally known. Urgent letters were addressed to the chief of the party, still out of town, and the accounts of what followed can best be given in Melbourne's own words.

"On Thursday last, being at Woburn, I received letters stating that the matter would brook no further delay, and urging me and John Russell to come up to town for the purpose of settling it, as Abercromby would come to no decision until he had seen us. We immediately started for London, and as a prompt declaration of our intentions was absolutely necessary, we determined the question in the course of the day, and I wrote to you by that night's post. This unavoidable haste will account to you for your having received my

¹ Private and confidential from Bowood to T. S. Rice, February 1st, 1835, MS.

² From Wiseton, January 31st, 1835.

letter and the announcement in the *Globe* at the same time. I am as much concerned as you can be about what has taken place ; and am sensible of the inconvenience to which it subjects you, and I can assure you that I lament that you should be disappointed in an object which you so much wish to attain. The only consolation I feel is in the recollection that you will be left at liberty to undertake higher and more arduous duties ; and if any of us should at any future time be called upon to advise the King, we shall have it in our power to avail ourselves of your valuable service and assistance. With respect to the success of the attempt it is impossible to say anything until the sentiments of members are a little more ascertained. But I may say in confidence that those who are best acquainted with the House of Commons do not appear to consider it by any means so certain as you do. Some of our friends, they say, will vote for Sutton, and some will not vote against him. On the other hand, I am given to understand that he is by no means universally popular with his own party. John Russell showed me the letter which he wrote to you from Woburn. I do not distinctly recollect it. I thought it had only been for the purpose of ascertaining your general concurrence in the Irish Church measure. He knew then that I had written to Abercromby requesting him to reconsider his determination. I suppose the expressions which he used referred to the contingency which I then thought the most probable view, that Abercromby would persist in declining. I shall be very anxious to hear the opinion which you have written to Duncannon. I do not, of course, ask you what Stanley says, but if we could by any means learn the line which he is likely to pursue upon the question, it would be most important. You are mistaken in supposing that I derived my first information of John Russell's decision as to the Speakership from the *Globe*. I derived it from the *Morning Chronicle*. I told you that if Abercromby was in the field, I thought there would be some difficulty, because though you are as little likely to be aware of it as anybody, there is such a thing in the world as selfishness. With respect to yourself, you will be much more useful out of the Chair than in it, and you will rise higher in everybody's estimation."¹

The question of candidature being decided, Spring Rice wrote to Abercromby pledging his support ; but frankly owning his disappointment, and gravely though gently complaining of the reticence he had observed. His old friend replied :—

“You and I have now travelled the same road for many years, and I should be very sorry if anything should occur to separate us, or to promote any severance of feeling. Your letter has, for more reasons than one, given me pain, but I have no right to say one word that does not concern myself. I only wish to state to you how it happens that my name was changed very soon after we were dismissed. Lord Melbourne mentioned the chair to me ; I gave no final answer ; and I

¹ From South Street, February 2nd, 1835, MS.

considered it fully after I came here, and upon the dissolution wrote to Lord Melbourne to say that I had made up my mind against it, and he, to use his own expression, took my answer as decisive. I was not at all aware that it was in the least an object to you, or that you had ever thought of it. The first I ever heard of it was from one of our late colleagues, who mentioned it in a letter urging me to come forward. In all the subsequent letters which I wrote in answer to those who applied to me, I always declined, and urged that they should press you into the service. I left no such letters unanswered, until the 25th of January, when I received a letter from Lord Melbourne, saying that he had been so pressed by others to press me, that, however reluctant, he could not refuse to do so. He then stated his reasons ; and certainty of success was so far from being one of them that it is his letter which leads me to think that I shall not succeed. I have such reliance on the frankness and sincerity of Lord Melbourne, that I was sure there was nothing indirect or uncandid in his proceedings, and I thought that from respect to others I was bound to hear what was to be said, and I went to London. On doing so I was so much pressed that I had not the resolution to place my own wishes in opposition to the opinions of so many friends. The letters between John Russell and me were simply intended to place the grounds on which I ventured, after having so often refused, on what seemed to me to be the true footing. I think the whole proceedings questionable in prudence, although it looks as if Sutton had committed himself more than I had supposed. I take no part except writing to you. I have done and intend to do nothing in the matter. This is the course so far as I have been concerned, and I shall only add that I shall always feel regret that you had not written to me, for I now see how much good would have resulted from your having done so. I wish equally that your feelings had been differently stated from what they were in the single communication I received on the subject ; but this I say to you in confidence, from my regard for you, and in justice to myself.”¹

Much it was thought would turn on the part taken by Lord Stanley, which would probably indicate the determination of Lord G. Bentinck Mr. Evelyn Denison, Sir George Sinclair, Mr. Emerson Tennent, Sir R. Ferguson, and a good many more. Melbourne could not expect Spring Rice to show him letters which from old intimacy were likely to be still confidential, and which, as his sagacity divined, did contain in point of fact no end of comments upon men and things, made by the impulsive writer as unreservedly, and without concealment of any sort or kind, as if written for no other eye than his own. But he did not hesitate to let Melbourne know that he meant to vote for the old Speaker, whose views were hardly more at variance with his than Abercromby's, and were less important, inasmuch as there was less chance of their being inflicted in practice on the country. The

¹ From Abercromby to T. S. Rice, February 4th, 1835.

advocate for triennial parliaments, the hesitator about ballot, and the voluntary principle as applied to the National Church, was entitled on party grounds to no support from him. His correspondent's support rested on other grounds, and its refusal would be open to imputations of motives by which he, of all men he knew, was least likely to be influenced. "But it was idle to conceal that parties were not, and never could be again, what they were. Lord Grey had kept together in a wonderful manner some very discordant materials. His control gone, they followed their natural tendency to diverge, and never could be reunited. Of Melbourne's Cabinet he thought he was not unwarranted in saying that once dissolved, its reunion as a whole was equally impracticable."¹

On the eve of the meeting of Parliament, Melbourne was overwhelmed with communications from the various sections of the party, some adjuring him to seek a union with Stanley and Graham, others to fraternise with Durham and the Radicals; some adjured him to throw office open to all creeds without distinction; others bid him beware of aggravating the "No Popery" cry. In answer to some suggestions from Spring Rice, he said, "With respect to the men and to the opinions to which you allude, I am as firmly resolved to keep clear of them as you are, and much rejoice to think that I shall have your support and countenance in so acting."²

"I return you Buxton's letter with many thanks. As you say, the sooner the late business is forgotten the better, and I only advert to it in order to express my hope that John Russell has explained to your satisfaction the circumstance of his letter, which when you mentioned it to me I could not account for. What may have passed between O'Connell and others, it is impossible for me to say. I can only assure you that any circumstance of the nature you mention, if it has taken place, has been studiously concealed from me, and not only is it so, but the precisely contrary representation has been made, viz., that he was prepared to vote for any one whom the party should propose. I believe he certainly designated Abercromby as the individual he should prefer. If any such report should obtain currency and belief it would at once be fatal to the result of the question. We cannot conceal from ourselves that the notion that we consulted with and were guided by O'Connell, did the late ministry in general and Duncannon in particular much injury. I feel myself personally to have been undeserving of the imputation, and am determined to continue so."³

After dinner at Hobhouse's on the 10th Poulett Thomson showed a list to J. Russell, Mulgrave and R. Gordon (an intimate of Melbourne's) which gave 223 English and Welsh votes for Abercromby, and which with the Scotch Liberals and 50 Irish who might be counted on, would secure him a majority; and the same day,

¹ From Knowsley, February 4th, 1835, MS.

² From Bocket Hall, February 11th, 1835.

³ To T. S. Rice, Panshanger, February 5th, 1835, MS.

Stephenson, who was an active member of the party at the Bar, and A. H. Lynch, who might have been supposed to know better, concurred in assuring Rolfe, who was known to be attached to Spring Rice, that O'Connell and most of his friends would rather vote for Sutton. It is curious to observe how close Thomson's calculation of English Whigs was to that of Lyndhurst, and how erring all surmises proved regarding the Irish members.¹ Melbourne, with Auckland, Abercromby, Hobhouse, and Lord John, spent the last days of January at Woburn, whither confidential reports of the canvass daily came, till at length they were assured that "three hundred would be brought to the post, and that the Tories were in a stew." Stanley had written to J. Russell to say that he would support Sutton, which had been expected. "Brougham returns from Nice on Sunday, with what temper or views I know not, for his letters of late have not alluded to politics otherwise than to convey his predominant feelings that of all men he is the one the most sinned against and the least sinning."² All sections finally agreed to support Abercromby. Great exertions were made on both sides, and when it became known that Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham would vote for Manners Sutton the friends of Government exulted beforehand in the triumph they felt to be assured. Lord Grey wrote from Howick "doubting the policy of taking the first battle on the Speakership, or on any question directly aimed at the existence of the Administration."³ And Melbourne himself, though surrounded by eager and sanguine partisans, did not profess to feel confident in the realisation of their prophecies. At length on the morning of the 19th of February, the temporary structure reared hastily on the site of the old House of Lords began to receive the members of the newly chosen House of Commons. It contained seats for not above three-fourths of those who might claim them, and when at two o'clock every place was occupied, the members who remained standing behind the chair and below the bar rendered the feeling of uncertainty more intense than ever as to the issue. The old Speaker, who was cheered as he took the first seat on the ministerial side below the gangway, looked as dignified and as authoritative as though he had been once more clothed with the insignia of office. Sir Robert Peel spoke briefly, and it was thought irresolutely; Stanley with a show of temper and desire to vindicate his divergence from his old friends provoked alternately ironical and applauding cheers. But it was not a theme for long debate, and the question was at length put by the Clerk of the Table, Mr. Ley, who, as bound in courtesy to the former Speaker, declared him to have the majority. The galleries were cleared and the counting began. It was customary then for both sides to remain in their places and there to be reckoned by the tellers, who stood between them with their wands of office. The ministerialists were declared to be 306, and already

¹ R. M. Rolfe to T. S. Rice, February 11th, 1835, MS.

² Lord Auckland, from Grove Road, February 7th, 1835.

³ From Howick, February 6th, 1835.

those about him congratulated Sutton on having manifestly won. Then came the reckoning for his opponent. Except the Opposition Whips, few felt sure that so great a number could be beaten, but when 300 had been told, and some difficulty was found in seeing accurately into the last corner of the crowded gangway on the left, the suspense was for the moment breathless. "Three hundred and five," and then there was a slight pause; "three hundred and six," a briefer pause; and then "three hundred and seven" called forth such a cheer as wholly drowned the rest of the announcements, which went on until the final numbers were declared to be for Abercromby, "three hundred and sixteen." The defeat of Government was the more significant, because Stanley and his friends were counted in the minority, while Lord Dudley Stuart, Sir Francis Burdett, Mr. Angerstein, and other Whigs stayed away. In the brief debate on the merits of the rival candidates, Lord John Russell was by general consent invested with the leadership of the Liberal party in the Commons, a position which he retained with great distinction and influence for the next twenty years.

The studious and thoughtful character of his mind instinctively led him to seek influence and fame as a legislator; and no handwriting is so traceable as his in the laws of our time. Melbourne was equally fitted by mother-wit, knowledge of the world, and discrimination of character to be a successful administrator. The capacities of the one supplemented well the capabilities of the other; and though it would perhaps have been impossible to find two eminent men with less in common by nature, habits, or tastes, they fitted admirably together when brought into intimate relations; and daily learned to appreciate more highly each other's ability and worth.

In the intervals of political excitement and ambition, the minister in expectancy found time for gossip with Mrs. Norton and the Miss Berrys, Lavalette, Bruce, and Haydon. Calling one morning, the painter found him lounging over the *Edinburgh Review*; he began instantly, "Why, here are a set of fellows who want public money for scientific purposes, as well as you for painting; they are a set of ragamuffins!" "That's the way," said I; "nobody has any right to public money but those who are brought up to politics. Are not painting and science as much matter of public benefit as political jobbing? You never look upon us as equals; but any scamp who trades in politics is looked on as a companion for my lord." "That is not true," said he. "I say it is," said I; and then he roared with laughter and rubbed his hands. He had been to Woburn, where he had met Chantrey and Landseer; I could not get him to touch on politics. "Lord Melbourne, will you make me a promise?" "What is that?" "Pass your word to get a vote of money for Art, if you are Premier again." Not a word. No old politician ever speaks on politics so as to give you a notion of what is going on. After chatting a good while about everything, I bid him good-bye."

On the 26th of February it appears that the artist wrote to his distin-

guished friend offering him a study of himself for ten guineas, but received no reply.

On the 1st of March he called on Melbourne, and found him reading the Acts with a quarto Greek Testament that belonged to Samuel Johnson, given him by Lady Spencer. "'Is not the world, Lord Melbourne, an evidence of perpetual struggle to remedy a defect?'" 'Certainly,' he mused out. 'If, as Milton says, we were sufficient to have stood, why did we fall?'" Lord Melbourne rose bolt up, and replied, 'Ah, that's touching on all our apprehensions.' We then swerved to Art. He advised us not to petition before Ewart's motion. I told him that all the ministers began with enthusiasm and ended with doubt, because they first saw the propriety of my propositions, and then asked advice of the Academy, who, perfectly contented with the monopoly and emolument, denied the necessity of State support."

While every step in the progress of conciliation between English Whigs and Irish Catholics was gravely denounced by the orators and the organs of Government, the way was strewn with thorns not the less sharp and deterrent because they could not with gravity be complained of and nobody knew whence they came. In a laughable sketch by H. B. entitled "Coalition,"¹ a sable wolf, with visage betraying an unmistakable likeness to the great Agitator, was engaged in *pourparler* with the foremost of the fleecy flock, whose features were those of their late shepherd. "Let us," exclaimed the former, "merge all our trifling differences and make a common war upon these tyrannical watch-dogs." The ministers, dimly seen in the distance, the shifting incidents of the time, and the remarkable physiognomies of some of the principal actors in the scene afforded tempting subjects for the graphic pencil of the humorist; and with marvellous facility he embodied in ever-varying forms of hybrid portraiture the current joke of the day. For sufficient reasons he chose to preserve the anonymity of initials not his own. Experience as an animal-painter enabled him to give originality of outline to his grotesque groups; and though he did not always use this fanciful element of fun, his happiest efforts were certainly those in which the characteristic expressions of biped and quadruped were mischievously mingled. "Neither an Opossum nor a Kangaroo, but something of both," delineated O'Connell benignantly nursing three small Whigs, whose heads are peeping out of his pouch. The success of these cartoons stimulated the fertility of the artist, and every other week there appeared a new one. If the hitting was often hard, it was always fair, each party and each celebrity coming in for a turn.

It would be idle to claim for Melbourne the strength of will, the originality of resource, the knowledge of detail, or the unfailing eloquence which in varying degrees characterised most of his predecessors and successors in the civil primacy. But he had a quality which they lacked, and which, at the juncture in question, tended in no small

¹ H. B., January 18th, 1835.

degree to bring about the unanimity wherewith it was agreed to have him a second time for chief of the party. He had no enmities and no enemies. Rancour was foreign to his nature ; and lasting resentment, no matter what the provocation, had not a hiding-place in his open heart. He could be angry, indignant, and unsparing at the time ; he gave back readily blow for blow ; and it must be owned that when stirred to wrath by unjust imputation, or unworthy conduct, his epithets were sometimes rough, and not unfrequently profane. On such occasions he would flush with rage, and swear he never would forgive the offender ; but he did forgive him the next morning all the same,—not for expediency or upon philosophical principle, but simply because he could not help it. He wondered in truth at the spleen and spite with which he saw men swayed continually. Talking to Auckland one day about the condition of parties, he said, “The great fault of the present time is that men hate each other so damnably ; for my part I love them all.”¹ His friend shared in a great degree this feeling, and observed that “if something of his amiable spirit could be caught by others and grafted on Lord Wellesley’s counsel *to demolish these people*, matters would not be so difficult.”

Before Parliament met Lord Spencer wrote :—

“I think you must have an amendment in the Commons. It must be strong enough to express the opinion of the House on the change of administration, but ought it not to be a little stronger ?”²

An amendment to the address, expressive of regret that the progress of salutary reforms had been interrupted and endangered by the dissolution of the late Parliament, was moved by Melbourne in a temperate speech, the principal interest of which lay in his authoritative account of his dismissal in October by the King. By implication a rebuke, if not a censure, was pronounced on ministers, who, by accepting office and advising an appeal to the country, had acted contrary to the interest and desire of the nation. The Duke of Wellington, mistaking the doctrine laid down by Melbourne, denied that he was in any way responsible for the displacement of the late Cabinet, which he declared had been a spontaneous act of his Majesty, wholly unsuggested and unexpected by him or by any of his colleagues. Brougham, who had assisted in preparing the amendment, contended that the constitutional doctrine of ministerial responsibility would be practically worthless if neither the outgoing nor incoming ministers were to be held accountable when a change of parties occurred. By accepting portfolios the new men became accessories after the fact in the eyes of Parliament, which must always have somebody or some set of men to make answerable for every high act of state. This was the very essence of constitutional government, the denial of which would subvert every security for popular freedom and for the conservation of limited monarchy. It was characteristic of the man that Melbourne thought it unnecessary

¹ From Lord Auckland, February 11th, 1835, MS.

² Lord Spencer to T. S. Rice, Wiseton, February 4th, 1835.

to enforce what, in his clear and cultivated judgment, seemed to be an elementary truth. He evidently did not anticipate the possibility of its being questioned, and thus it devolved on the ex-Chancellor to remind the peers of their rights and duties in a matter so momentous. In the Commons, when the same amendment was moved, Sir Robert Peel at once accepted fully the responsibility he had incurred by taking office, and endeavoured to justify the change he had manifestly not advised or foreseen, as he was travelling in Italy when it took place. He had counselled a dissolution because he could not govern with the late Parliament, and because he thought the country would elect another predominantly of his own opinions. The choice of Abercromby had already shaken this belief, and the majority in favour of the amendment to the address tended still further to dissipate it. In the Upper House it was, indeed, rejected without a division; but the impression made by the discussion was highly favourable to the ex-Premier.

Stanley tried hard to collect around him from both sides a moderate party, and strove to prove his own superiority as a leader by alternately quizzing and jeering the "Top-boot Tories" who held fast by too much, and the "Out and out Radicals who would leave nothing alone." But Conservatives who sighed in private at the unyielding temper and the *sic volo, sic jubeo* of the Field-Marshal Minister, winced when they heard him sneered at in public; and squeamish Whigs, who went about scolding their Whips for reckoning them with Repealers, asked one another in suspicious whispers what the would-be leader of a third party could mean by voting twice in the same week with the Government. On the Speakership he and his friends had reduced the majority to ten, and on the Address to seven. Malcontent murmurs arose in the Seceders' camp; and by way of trimming the balance of neutrality it was decided to support Sheil's motion of censure on the nomination of Lord Londonderry as Ambassador to Russia. The result was a defeat of Ministers. Upon the whole the numbers in Great Britain were nearly balanced, while the working majority of thirty was furnished by Ireland. The future policy of the Liberal party was marked with this initial, and every day quickened the popular conviction that, without an acknowledgment of the principle of equality in legislation for all parts of the United Kingdom, the Whigs could not hope for a return to power.

On the first Sunday in March the Duke of Sussex entertained all the members of the dismissed Cabinet (except Brougham), and other prominent members of the party; and the new leader of the Liberals in the Commons was entertained at a public dinner by 260 of his supporters. A fusion of all shades of opposition finally took place at a meeting held a fortnight later at Lichfield House, where it was resolved to merge past differences for the sake of securing an administration founded on the general principles in which all could consistently agree. No authorized report of the conference appeared in print; but an expression used by Sheil that between sections hitherto discordant a "compact alliance had been formed," was made the text

of much invective and reproach; and of reiterated imputation that beneath the roof of the late Master of the Buckhounds *a compact* had been made with the chief of the Catholic party by Melbourne. How he dealt with the assertion we shall presently see.

On the eve of Lord J. Russell's motion to appropriate the surplus funds of the Established Church in Ireland to general purposes of education, the Stanleyites, to the number of twenty-nine, met at the "King's Head," Palace Yard, and there agreed to disagree, in accordance with the admonitions and remonstrances of their varied constituencies. Twelve found it necessary to vote with the Opposition; two or three thought they had better stay away; and the rest would vote with Peel. The consequences of this disunion soon appeared. Stanley, in debate, prefigured in terms of caustic humour the impending restoration of the Melbourne Cabinet; and Graham solemnly forewarned them that the principle of expropriating Church revenues never could be carried into effect. But the House, indifferent alike to persiflage and prophecy, by 321 to 289, voted that the Anglican Establishment in Ireland was excessive, and that its surplus revenues ought to be applied to the purpose of general education. On bringing up the report of the resolution on the 6th of April, the majority was 25, and on the final vote the following day, in a House of 543, Sir Robert Peel was defeated by 27. He had fully redeemed his promise to the electors of Tamworth, to fight it out as long as honour or propriety would admit; and nothing more remained for him but to resign.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FORMING A GOVERNMENT.

Refusal to attempt coalition—Brougham and O'Connell left out—Jealousy of Palmerston—Irish Law Officers—Thomas Drummond.

ON Wednesday, the 8th of April, the Conservative Premier told the King that the Government was at an end. No step was taken until the following morning, when Earl Grey was summoned, less with the expectation that he could be prevailed upon to resume office, than that he would patriotically advise as to who should be sent for. He named Lansdowne and Melbourne, and was desired to attend with them next day.

In the audience of Friday William IV. betrayed little of the vexation and fear to which he was a prey. He discussed with dignity and calmness the position of affairs, asking counsel of each in turn, weighing carefully the requirements of the time, and intimating his wish that means might be found for bringing about an administrative union of the moderate men of both parties. Lansdowne and Mel-

bourne stated without reserve that under the circumstances such a coalition was impossible ; and referred to the resolutions lately carried in the House of Commons regarding the Irish Church, as forming in themselves an insuperable obstacle to ministerial fusion. The King did not seem convinced, and said he would consider further what was to be done, and they left the Palace without any definite intimation of his intentions. On Saturday, the 11th of April, Melbourne was summoned alone and desired to undertake the formation of a Government. He accepted the task with due acknowledgments, but conditionally on being able to secure the co-operation of those without whom it would be beyond his power. His first step on quitting the Palace was to seek Lord Grey, with a view of persuading him if possible to assume once more the head of affairs. He found him despondent, and tried to rally his old courage ;—obdurate, from the recollection of having been, as he thought, ill used ; and he tried to mollify his resentment. He failed ; but on leaving him, sought to combine influences which might prove more potent than his own. At the close of a day spent in conference with the leading members of the party, he confessed to Lansdowne that he was unable to see his way :—

“I have seen Grey again, and also John Russell. The latter agrees with the opinion which you gave me this morning, but is by no means sanguine. Grey sees great difficulties, and I must own that the more I contemplate the question the greater those difficulties appear to me, both in general and in detail. I have seen Rice this evening, and find him also opposed to the undertaking. Unless we can carry him along with us it is idle to think of it. I have desired him to call here to-morrow morning, and will bring him to you that we may again talk over the matter. I have not written to the King as yet to name any hour for waiting upon him. John Russell’s matrimonial engagement is very unlucky.”¹

Later in the evening he received the following letter from his Majesty, which he at once communicated to Lansdowne and Grey.²

“The King returns approved to the Viscount Melbourne the letter he has this instant received at Gloucester House signed by five of the Cabinet ministers who formed the Administration under Lord Grey.

“The King requests the Viscount to make known to Lord Grey his Majesty’s anxious wish to see the Earl at the head of the Government, and to recall to the recollection of Lord Grey the serious regret of his Majesty at being deprived of the able services of the Earl, and consequently the satisfaction the King must feel at the return of the Earl to the head of his Majesty’s confidential servants.

“The King trusts to see Lord Grey to-morrow, to repeat these sentiments to his Lordship, and to arrange the Earl’s acceptance of First Lordship of the Treasury.

“(Signed) WM. R.

“Gloucester House, April 11th, 1835.”

¹ From South Street, April 11th, 1835, MS.

² From South Street, April 12th, 1835, MS.

The veteran statesman would not swerve from his resolve, and bade Melbourne try if he could succeed. Spring Rice objected, as he said, to embarking in an enterprise so difficult, if they must be dependent on the caprice of the Ultras. He foresaw, more clearly than many of his friends, elate with triumph at the recent divisions, and unaccustomed to the drawbacks and perplexities of official life, how difficult it would be to repel the taunts of a powerful and angry Opposition on subjects especially connected with Ireland, without alienating a section of her representatives whose votes on a question of confidence they could not spare ; and if not repelled effectively and firmly, who could tell how many sensitive or unsatisfied Whigs would be missing when most wanted ? But in a long conference on the 12th at Lansdowne House, his misgivings were overborne by the arguments of his former chief in office, from whom throughout a long political life, though he sometimes differed, he never parted. The Marquis did not hesitate to say, "Of all the leading members of the House of Commons with whom I have acted, or it is probable I shall ever act, in public life, you are the one in whom I should feel the greatest confidence at this critical period, both with respect to the measures which should be supported and those which should be resisted."¹ Auckland's reappointment as First Lord of the Admiralty increased his own satisfaction in being again Lord President.

The new Government had likewise the aid in council and debate of the favourite nephew and pupil of Fox ; the fearless and eloquent friend of every rightful cause ; and the most cosmopolitan host of genius, learning, and wit, in Europe. He had been Privy Seal in the administration of All the Talents, and he was now named Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Between him and the Premier there had always existed the most entire confidence and unison, though in temperament there could not be a more subtle contrast. Both were upright, brave, and consistent advocates of what they believed to be true ; and both undaunted and outspoken censors of what they held to be false. Lord Grey was by nature cold, haughty, and unsympathetic ; without a gleam of humour or a flash of imagination ; morbidly sensitive to neglect, or any supposed infringement of his dignity ; and embittered by long exclusion from power. Lord Holland had likewise been shut out with the rest of his party ; but with him it was no matter of grievance, far less of resentment. His joyous spirit revelled all the while in the liberty of questioning and quizzing, of criticism and caricature ; and the only revenge he ever thought of taking was that of earnest denunciation of bad measures or pitiless ridicule of the bad logic used in support of them. Around him at his matchless house near town were gathered all the risen and the rising talent in politics and letters. And there, with true republican absence of conventionality, was discussed every novelty and difficulty in opinion. Host and hostess had their favourites ; none were more zealous partisans ; but neither foreign birth nor alienation in political sentiment excluded an able man or a

¹ Letter, January 16th, 1835.

witty woman from the circle, who had once been appreciated there. The predominant hue was always Whig, and something more ; but Lyndhurst was welcome after he had ceased to be Jacobin, and Scarlett after he had ceased to be a Whig, and the Lievens, Talleyrand and Guizot seemed as much at home at Holland House as Czartoryski or Louis Napoleon. There was indeed, as there must always be in a society so varied, an inner circle of intimated and *habitués*, like Mackintosh, Sydney Smith, Rogers, and Tom Moore, subject to the capricious rule of Lady Holland, whose likings and dislikes were often unaccountable and were always made known without reserve. It was the freest and merriest, the brightest and the most enjoyable centre of intellectual intercourse English life has ever known. Its value to the Liberal party was wholly inestimable. Lord Grey was one of the stars of this social firmament, observed by all when he appeared at intervals, and very conscious, in his melancholy way, of admiration. He was not, however, a man of pleasantry or gossip ; he relished keenly repartee or sarcasm, but he could not if he would, and he would not if he could have indulged, like the master of the house, in mimicry, or like the Canon of St. Paul's, in jokes worthy of Tristram Shandy. Badinage was not in his line, and no one would have ever thought of bantering him. It was otherwise with Melbourne, who was ever welcome with or without invitation, and whose quaint and sometimes brusque originality was exactly what was truest to the genius of the place and was there most thoroughly loved. With Allen he could talk of books ; with Mackintosh of canonists and historians ; with Lady Holland of the foibles of pretty women and the oddities of men of mark ; with Macaulay of travel, poetry, and speculation, and all the rest beside. Never taking the trouble to shine, he bore his part gaily or gravely as it might be in the general talk ; never quarrelling with my Lady when whimsical or disposed to domineer, and choosing rather to laugh her out of her petulance than yield her the triumph of being insolent with impunity. Lord Lansdowne was as ready to encourage raillery and to take a joke without huff ; but he had not the same skill of fence or promptitude of repartee. It has been said, however, and doubtless with truth, that towards Melbourne there was habitually a certain cautiousness in making free by those who knew the sensitiveness of the man, and how he chafed and writhed in silence when the quick was touched, although too manly to betray a motion to unfamiliar eyes. Had he not felt safe at Holland House he would not have gone there as often as he did : being at his ease, the relief and the refreshment of its society was, during his official life, the best of privileges and pleasures.

Lord John Russell agreed to be Home Secretary, Charles Grant, Colonial, and Lord Howick was named Secretary at War ; and late in the afternoon of Monday the 13th, Melbourne acquainted his Majesty that he had made some progress in his arduous undertaking, and that he entertained reasonable confidence of being able to complete it.

Hobhouse became President of the Board of Control. Adverse critics asked, what did he know about India ; how we had come by it ; or how it ought to be governed ? It could only be said on his behalf, that he was not more ignorant of Oriental affairs than his predecessors for half a century had been, who, with the single exception of Sir Gilbert Elliot, had to learn the alphabet of the administrative policy of conquest. Some of them, like Castlereagh and Canning, had brought to the discharge of their duties the rare fitness for exalted rule, which men call statesmanship ; most of the others possessed no such qualities by nature, and never acquired them. The member for Nottingham had written a volume of travels and two clever pamphlets ; had made several caustic speeches ; had fought some expensive elections, and was ready to fight as many more when needed. He was very rich, kept an excellent house, was fond of humour, if not a wit, and being early pledged to household suffrage and the ballot, without being suspected of impracticable zeal for these or any other measures, he was in the position of an eligible Radical, whose admission, if it did not satisfy the advanced section, would at least help to stifle the reproach of exclusiveness. He felt himself, indeed, in the condition of a hostage, rather than a thoroughly trusted comrade ; for, having regard to his past professions, he knew that he should be nearly alone. It was in this view he told the Premier that he thought his new Cabinet was not so liberal as his former Administration ; alluding to the absence of Lord Spencer, Ellice, and Abercromby, all of whom were balloteers. Melbourne replied, that some people told him it was too Jacobinical. Had he sent Lord Durham to Ireland, or made O'Connell Attorney-General, there would have been more colour in the taunt. But as it stood, the Government was in its composition less committed to further measures of organic change than that of the preceding year. In departmental efficiency it was certainly not less strong ; but with all his personal good qualities, Hobhouse added little to its strength.

The Board of Control had been invented by Pitt to check, as he said, the illiberal and exacting tendencies of a trading company to abuse the unprecedented powers they required for territorial dominion. It was to maintain the moral and political influence of England in the East, by seeing that justice was done to the natives subject to our sway, and faith kept with the independent princes, encroachment on whose territories we did not desire. It was to be a counter-weight to avaricious enterprise, a guarantee against insidious or open aggression ; and had its president always been a man of generous and enlightened sentiments, and of resolute and active will, the mechanism of counterpoise might have answered its design ; but the design was speedily forgotten in the exigencies of party and the perplexities of increasing debt. The patronage of India became too easily a means of satisfying importunate friends and gratifying ambitious expectants. In the main a good understanding, as it was pleasantly called, was established between Leadenhall Street and Cannon Row ; and except on rare

occasions, the very theory of check and balance in what was termed the double Government was put out of view. Parliament had recently interfered to break down the old chart of monopoly, and to throw open the trade of the East ; and great expectations were held forth that a policy truly imperial in its scope and beneficent in its aim was about to be inaugurated. But the great opportunity was thrown away.

Lord Wellesley had settled in his own mind that he was to be replaced on the Viceregal throne, and was surprised and mortified at being offered instead the Gold Key of Lord Chamberlain. He accepted it, was sworn in, and held it for a few weeks ; when, owing to something which has never been fully explained, he suddenly gave it up, and never after was invited to take office.

One of the greatest difficulties was how to deal with Brougham, whose re-appointment as Chancellor was impossible after all the pranks that he had played. For some time Melbourne had made up his mind not to sit in the same Cabinet again with him, and previous to accepting office, he communicated frankly the nature of his objections to his principal colleagues, by whom they were fully shared. Lord Russell testifies, from personal knowledge of all the circumstances, that these involved no charges of treachery, political or social ; but his inveterate propensity to meddle in the business of departments not his own, his utter want of reticence where others had an indefeasible claim upon his silence, and his insatiable desire to engross the praise of every act to which he was in any degree a party, rendered him incurably unreliable as a confidant. Macaulay may have been prejudiced against him by early slights ; and no man was more likely to have thus affronted a youthful candidate for party favour who disdained to offer incense to his exacting vanity ; but this will hardly account for the language of antipathy and contempt in which we find him speaking of Brougham in after-years. Instability of purpose, chameleon-like changefulness of talk, forgetfulness of what he had vehemently urged but yesterday, exaggeration in every tone, whether of praise or blame, and recklessness in pursuit of every project, whether great or small, flattery to excess where it was not desired, and vituperation beyond bounds where it was not deserved, intrusiveness without regard to delicacy or decorum, and usurpation to the vulgar eye of a supremacy in council which he never ventured to arrogate there,—these and many other faults and foibles were lamented and forgiven by Melbourne, but only for a reason which in itself outweighed them all, and rendered it impossible for him even to consider the question of recommending him again to be keeper of the conscience of the King. They had long been intimate ; they had had no quarrel ; their orbits did not intersect each other. Melbourne appreciated intensely the vigour, aptitude, indefatigability, rhetorical power, and genuine though frequently grotesque humour of the man. He knew that he might often feel the want of his aid in the struggle that was to come ; and what a fire-ship he would prove were he cut adrift. Melbourne did not like the prospect ; but it might be worse. Better let him rove at sea, than prow

about in harbour. But, convinced that he was not always accountable for his words and actions, that unconsciousness rather than unconscientiousness was the cause of his chief errors, he felt that it would be unpardonable to place him at the head of the judicature of the realm, and in direct contact with the Sovereign by whom he was feared and loathed. Speaking of the humiliated and frightened monarch with a consideration that was his wont, he said to an old friend, "Even if all the rest agreed to let in Brougham, I could not bring myself to force him on the King." But of "all the rest" who were immediately concerned or consulted, there was scarcely one who thought he should be recalled. Even Lord Spencer so clearly "saw his glaring defects, and the mischief they were calculated to do himself and every one with whom he was acting, that though he lamented, he by no means censured his being thrown overboard."¹ Intrigue of every kind was his delight; not for mischief or for gain, but often, as he persuaded himself, for the accomplishment of public benefit; often, as he undoubtedly intended, for the advancing of neglected worth and talent which he undertook to patronise, but often for the perverse pleasure of overreaching and outwitting those whom he was bound loyally to consult and aid. In Melbourne's words, "if left out he would indeed be dangerous; but if taken in he would simply be destructive. We may have little chance of being able to go on without him, but to go on with him would be impossible." Terms or conditions that would bind such a Proteus were not within the inventive brain of man; for his opinions varied with the wind, and his memory of promises and professions ebbed and flowed by laws of attraction unknown to the rest of this sublunary world. What rendered the embarrassment greater was the palpable fact that up to the last moment he had not the least suspicion of being thought incompatible or crazy: on the contrary, he spoke and acted in undoubting confidence that he was about to resume his seat on the woolsack; and he was already ruminating the topics of a re-inaugural address to the Bar. No one ventured before the necessity arose to undertake the task of undeceiving him. But at length the hour had arrived, and he must now be told that he was not again to be Chancellor. What was to be done; should the painful communication be made to him in writing, or by the lips of some judicious friend who might bear unmoved the first outbreak of astonishment and wrath? Melbourne with characteristic pluck resolved to be the bearer of his own message, and to take upon his own head the responsibility of the unexpected blow. Late in the evening he called at Berkeley Square, and in an interview which lasted more than two hours, sought to mitigate the pain he was obliged to inflict, and to soothe the irritation which he too well knew was likely to prove dangerous. When he said he was not in a position to offer the Great Seal to anybody, Brougham at a glance divined what was coming, and said that had he come to offer it to him he would not have accepted it.

¹ From Earl Spencer to T. S. Rice, April 19th, 1835.

Equally adroit, Melbourne rejoined that he was not at all surprised to hear him say so. It was for a time a contest of finesse, in which the ex-Chancellor strove to hide his mortification in profuse compassion for the crippled and helpless condition in which his friend would find himself at the head of a feeble Ministry ; while the new Premier appealed to the magnanimity of his ostracised colleague to maintain a dignified and generous attitude, which would enable him to effect much public good. Brougham was hard to be convinced that some one else was not about to have the Great Seal ; but when assured that it was in contemplation to put it in commission for some time, he grew more tractable, and began to think that after all his interest was to be sacrificed only for a season to appease the ill-humour of the Court. Before the end of the interview he was half disposed to forgive Melbourne for sake of the enjoyment of patronising and protecting him, even as Pitt befriended Addington. So readily did this vanity strike root and grow, that during the rest of the session he was irrepressible in assiduous care of what he chose to call a ministry of transition. Had the chancellorship been at once filled up by the appointment of either Pepys, Bickersteth, or Campbell, this curious phase would never have occurred. Brougham would have naturally ascribed his exclusion wholly to the King ; and in the state of public feeling then existing, had he flung himself boldly into the stream, there is no saying how far his marvellous powers as a demagogue might have changed the course of events. But he knew the weakness of William IV.'s character, and imagined that by-and-by his grudge would wear away. The King's health, moreover, was impaired, and in a new reign who could be Chancellor but the man whom the people delighted to honour ? With his peerage, his pension of five thousand a year, and his time at his own disposal for speech-making, pamphleteering, article-writing and private talk, what might he not effect ? He would find out by degrees who had been undermining him, and he would smite them hip and thigh. Meanwhile he would hold the fate of Government in the hollow of his hand, and play a greater part than ever. At heart Melbourne did not relish the prospect before him. It is not clear that he had altogether relinquished the hope of being able after a time to offer the ex-Chancellor some other office ; but he was too wary to commit himself by any promise to one so totally irretentive of confidence : and, in truth, any suggestion of the kind made in the first moments of disappointment would have tended only to exacerbate the wound. The vagueness in which the future was left, led to the conclusion in the mind of Brougham that he might render himself either so useful or so formidable that he must yet be restored.

Lord Morpeth, whose recent triumph in the West Riding was due in no small degree to his popularity with the middle classes, and who by affinity represented the most influential Whig connection, was named Secretary for Ireland. To appease the natural curiosity and solicitude with which the course of events was awaited there, Holland wrote in confidence to Lord Cloncurry, who was to communicate to

the Duke of Leinster and other friends that "after a joint earnest but fruitless endeavour of his late colleagues and the King to prevail on Lord Grey to resume office, Lord Melbourne was authorized to form a Ministry. With one painful exception, occasioned in a great measure by public feeling, just or unjust, he would not have to encounter more difficulties and annoyances than usually attend the appointment of some, and the disappointment of others in such an operation."¹

When Lord Grey refused to return to the Treasury, it was the hope of the King and of Melbourne that he might consent, like Lord Chatham, to take the Privy Seal with a view to guiding the conduct of foreign affairs. Holland especially tried to persuade him, partly from old friendship and partly from his tendency to differ with Palmerston, whose return to his former office he viewed with anything but satisfaction. Up to the last it was regarded as doubtful what the ex-Premier's decision would be. Palmerston well knew the favourable influence Grey's adhesion would have on the prospects of the Government; but he naturally expected to be replaced in the Foreign Office; and when asked if there was nothing else he would accept, he declined. He had not anticipated having any competitor for a post he had filled with conspicuous ability and success, though not without creating many enemies. He had offended Talleyrand and other members of the diplomatic corps past forgiveness. They had frequently complained of his demeanour towards them. He sometimes kept them waiting long after the hour appointed for assembling in conference on the Belgian Question; and he took small pains to conceal at times how little store he set on their suggestions or arguments. Lansdowne and Holland were for the most part the medium through which expressions of their ill-humour were conveyed, and there are reasons for believing that an attempt was made in the reconstruction of the Cabinet to induce Palmerston to accept another office. It became, in fact, a cause of some difficulty, and for a day or two of doubt, whether another appointment should not be made. But his alienation, added to all the defections of the preceding year, was not a danger to be trifled with. Durham had long set his heart upon the Secretaryship of State, and one of his discontents with his father-in-law was that he had not in this respect promoted his views. He now urged Lord Grey to recommend his appointment, and thought an English peerage and an Irish marquise with some office of the first rank might induce Palmerston to give way. Melbourne had no wish, however, to intrust Durham with the management of Foreign Affairs. He had had ample experience of the intractability of his temper during the period of the Reform Bill. Any embassy he liked he should have and welcome, but not a department in which he had had no experience and would not submit to be controlled. He was perhaps the last man to whom Palmerston would give way in the office he had

¹ April 14th, 1835.

occupied, for four years, and the idea of any one being preferred to him there filled him with resentment. He might, if he would, have had the Viceroyalty of Ireland, where he possessed landed property ; or that of India, with whose affairs as connected with those of Russia, Persia, and the Levant he was officially familiar. But he could not brook what he regarded as the indignity of being superseded in the department with which he had identified his name, and to be banished from the scene and centre of power, by the party for whom he had quitted the ranks of the Tories,—ranks which would receive him with acclamation were he to return to them. The secession of Stanley and his friends, and the disposition already manifested by several others to go over would render this all the easier. In point of fact, up to this period Palmerston was not a member of Brooks's, and was hardly recognised as a Whig. He had never quarrelled with the Duke or Peel, and with Stanley he always contrived to get on very well. Many years after, when new schemes of coalition were on the carpet, and when Lord Derby had become the acknowledged chief of the Conservative party, he used the expression, "After all Stanley has always been very liberal:"¹ and at heart there was not much difference of sentiment between them, though their paths diverged, and henceforth they sat on opposite sides. It cannot be denied that Melbourne would have been glad if Lord Grey could have been prevailed on to take, or virtually to guide as formerly the Foreign Department. But on his refusal he made up his mind to give it back to his old friend. The Earl announced that he had finally relinquished official life ; but he was gratified at his son being named Secretary at War, with a seat in the Cabinet, while his nephew was named Under-Secretary of the Colonies, one son-in-law appointed Secretary to the Admiralty, and another ambassador to St. Petersburg. Besides his proxy or his vote he promised to exercise his influence in support of the Government, and on one or two occasions he defended their measures in debate. But the loss of individual importance was not consoled by the exceptional preference shown to his connexions. He chafed and fretted at what he deemed neglect, and complained that he saw daily many persons of note and fashion pass his door who but yesterday had been impatient if not admitted.

Failing to obtain the Foreign Office, which was the object of his ambition, Durham consented to go as ambassador to St. Petersburg. Palmerston sagaciously resolved to avoid the possibility of a second refusal by the Czar ; and confidentially inquired whether the Radical earl would be acceptable ; and on receiving an intimation that no difficulty would be made, his appointment was submitted for approval to the King. His Majesty assented, but on being told soon afterwards of preliminary inquiries having been made regarding the disposition of the Autocrat, he waxed exceeding wrath, and sharply complained to Melbourne that he had been slighted by his Foreign Secretary.

¹ In conversation with the Author.

"Here," he wrote, "is the devil to pay about this appointment of Durham. The King has taken great offence at the Emperor of Russia's consent having been obtained before Durham was named to him. I send you the correspondence which has passed. There is another long explanatory letter of Palmerston's, which went also to him this morning. His censure of Palmerston is so violent that I know not how I can acquiesce under it. I have not been well, but I will come to the House of Lords."¹

On Monday the 13th there was some discussion about the basis of the proposed Cabinet. Differences existed as to the proportion in which diverging sections could be combined in it, and with regard to appointments in the household, and to the reserved power of creating peers. The King conceded what was asked, and matters seemed going on smoothly, and up to Tuesday night there appeared no reason to anticipate any insuperable difficulty. Meanwhile, however, unwarier hands than Melbourne's were at work, busily employed in building adjuncts to the edifice which were considered out of keeping with the original design. Mulgrave, who had won a certain reputation as Governor of Jamaica, was appointed Viceroy of Ireland. No proposal had been made for the inclusion of O'Connell or any of his personal friends. Whatever the intentions of the Premier at the moment may have been, he understood too well the antipathy felt by Lord Grey and the aversion entertained by his Majesty, to mention the great Agitator's name. Without the support of the Irish popular party, it was obvious that no Liberal ministry could stand. But unless it were constituted without resort to a coalition, it was equally obvious to him that it could never begin to exist. If Ireland was to be tranquillised, the chief spokesman of discontent must be conciliated; and it was not in human nature to expect that one who had proved himself to be indispensable, and whose eloquence, ability and energy friends and foes agreed in acknowledging as transcendent, should acquiesce in public ostracism. If a Government could be formed upon the principle of doing equal justice to men of all opinions and beliefs, Catholics would be admitted gradually to office; and if he was without a rival amongst them in political capacity he could not be long excluded. But the violence of his language on many occasions, and the menaces he had openly used regarding the stability of the Union, had so recently exasperated, not merely Court and Parliament, but the great body of the educated community, that it would have been impossible to obtain a fair hearing for the new policy if O'Connell as one of its advocates should take his seat on the Treasury Bench. That he himself was not conscious of his own incompatibility, and that he expected the offer of high administrative office to be made to him, is beyond all doubt. That Melbourne's absolute reserve and silence was likely to be misunderstood by him is equally clear: but that under the circumstances it was wise hardly admits of question. We only know

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, June 30th, 1835, MS.

that others, less discerning and considerate, thought fit to interpose, and by doing so well-nigh overset all that his care and circumspection had been bringing to completion.

Rumours quickly reached the Palace that the man whom the King had been advised to denounce from the throne as an incendiary was about to be proposed to him as Attorney-General for Ireland. His fear and anger knew no bounds: "Lord Grey would never have done this; and would never sanction it. Melbourne was too flexible, too easy; but he would put in writing without delay the terms on which alone he would appoint the new ministers." On Wednesday morning came a letter of six pages about O'Connell and Hume, and above all about the appropriation of Church revenues, to which his Majesty protested he would not consent. Melbourne wrote a short and very decisive answer, and subsequently went to St. James's. He told his Majesty that he would not submit to have any one excluded, but that there was no intention of employing either Hume or O'Connell. He said that it was necessary to do one of three things: 1st, to act on the resolutions of the House of Commons with a new Cabinet; 2nd, to oppose the resolutions with the old Cabinet, or a similar Cabinet and with the present Parliament; 3rd, to dissolve the Parliament. The King said it would be madness to dissolve Parliament now, and he seemed satisfied with Melbourne's explanation. But shortly after he left the Palace came another letter from his Majesty, urging the propriety of quieting his scruples as to the violation of the Coronation Oath, in consenting to the application of Church property to secular purposes, and proposing that the fifteen judges should be consulted thereupon. In consequence of this suggestion it was agreed that the House of Commons should be further adjourned to Saturday. Melbourne strongly objected to consulting the judges, and the King gave up that proposal, but recommended that he should ask the opinion of Lyndhurst. Melbourne said that he would not advise such a step, but if his Majesty chose to take it he could. Accordingly the King wrote to Lyndhurst, and Melbourne saw the letter.¹ The ex-Chancellor was too cautious a man to commit himself to any opinion of the sort after the experience he had had of colleagues in council; and with due apologies he positively declined to perform the function of keeping the royal conscience when no longer Keeper of the Seal.

Upon a recent occasion it appears that expressions had publicly fallen from O'Connell which led to the inference that he would not be unwilling to take office under the newly-formed Liberal Administration, "to try how far England could legislate for Ireland in a manner that would content the people." The statement naturally attracted comment, and he soon afterwards declared that he had no such view or intention. He had, in fact, popularity and income to risk, if not to sacrifice, which no one else had at the time, by the acceptance of

¹ 'Lord Broughton's Recollections,' vol. iii. pp. 114-116.

place. His annual tribute in 1834 had amounted to £13,000; and at the general election of 1835 three of his sons and three other near relatives were returned, avowedly in compliment to him.

The personal antipathy prevalent at the time among men, even of moderate opinions, was indescribable. Speaking on the subject long afterwards,¹ Lord Lansdowne said :—

“It was extraordinary, the effect he had produced in this way. After Lord Melbourne’s Government was formed and O’Connell became one of its supporters, Mr. Thomas Grenville, with whom I had been most intimate for many years, wrote to me, saying that he regretted he could no longer visit my house, as he could not go anywhere where he incurred the risk of meeting O’Connell. And this he did though it happened that O’Connell never had been here. Sir J. Graham’s conduct in 1834 and subsequently was greatly influenced by a like aversion.”

There are some passages in Greville’s Journal of the 9th and 11th of April 1835, which throw light on these transactions. They tend to show the prevalent expectation among men of influence of both parties, that when the Whigs got in the Irish Leader must have office. The Stanleyites still hovering between them, deprecated this as against the chance of re-uniting with their old friends, and thereby depreciating their value in the eyes of Peel. The general notion seems to have been, that though beaten and pushed out for the time, the Conservatives would come back ere long. Graham played for this, and therefore wished the King to refuse making peers or recognising O’Connell. He knew that Lord Grey would give him this advice, and he knew that he would be consulted, as he actually was when Melbourne was recalled. All this being known to Mulgrave, who was pulling hard the opposite way, points to the probability of his talking flatteringly to the Agitator without knowing whether he could make good his *un*-authorised promises or not. Realised or unrealised they would secure his personal good will, which we know somehow or other, Mulgrave actually did secure in an unbounded degree. Yet O’Connell’s sagacity could not have been deceived as to the true character of the man. The passages in Greville seem to be jotted down without connection or purpose. They are therefore all the more reliable. He does not say, and it is not likely that he knew, when writing on the 11th of April, all that had taken place. In the midst of a ministerial crisis there is not time to post up guesses and intrigues among the various actors in the scene. His silence on the specific allegation respecting the Attorney-Generalship amounts to nothing; but everything he does say, both before and after the supposed negotiation, confirms the story. The intentions of O’Connell, if likewise left out had still to be ascertained. There are reasons for believing that Mulgrave, eager to secure his confidence, and without authority, led him to expect the Irish Attorney-Generalship, the office of all others for which he was

¹ To the Author, July 23rd, 1862.

fitted, and which would have gratified other feelings than those of mere ambition. Credulous and sanguine beyond ordinary men, he had already ruminated various plans and arrangements for the suitable filling of that situation. He understood thoroughly the administrative power it would enable him to wield. To six millions of people his appointment would have been the visible embodiment and positive realisation of the statute of 1829; and it would have shortened by at least a decade the tedious and shameful struggle to make that law a reality. For six months he had cordially, without bond or bargain, lent his aid to reinstate the Whigs in power; aid without which that reinstatement must have been deferred for many a day. Now that it was effected he received without misgiving an intimation that he should be sent back to Ireland as Attorney-General. But when his expectation was communicated to the leading members of the proposed Cabinet, it threatened to cause its premature disruption; and the only question was who would undertake the unenviable duty of disenchanting their formidable ally of the anticipations he cherished, and at the same time satisfying him that all idea of sectarian or personal exclusion was at an end. Many years after Mr. Ellice is described as narrating how he undertook the task. He said that he waited on O'Connell, and told him frankly that he was the bearer of very unwelcome tidings; that notwithstanding all he had done and had it in his power to do for the Liberal party, his best friends were unable to overcome for the moment the prejudices against him, and that unless he consented magnanimously to waive his personal claims, all chance of forming a new ministry must be abandoned. O'Connell did not hide his disappointment. He owned that he had looked forward with no little pride and satisfaction to the recognition officially of what he felt to be his due. He knew better than those who were jealous of him the healing and tranquillising effects that might be produced by his appointment. He added that "he wished for it on other grounds. He longed for the opportunity of proving to the Protestants of Ireland that when in power he could and would do them justice." No protestations however warm, or forbearance however disinterested, would ever disarm their apprehensions of Catholic ascendancy, and while those apprehensions lasted, and Catholics were excluded in their own land from their just share in the Government, peace and contentment there could never be. He had meant to fill the office as it had not been filled for many years, and with a view to generous hospitality he had told his son to make inquiries about a mansion suitable for the purpose, which he believed he had already found. The nature of the man is portrayed more faithfully in such a trait and in its frank avowal than in all the invectives and eulogies of which he was the object. Ellice did everything to soothe him, and particularly dwelt upon the difficulties of the moment, suggesting that all would be well were time allowed.¹

¹ Letter from Mr. Justice Keogh to Sir Coleman O'Loughlen, December 22nd, 1874, MS.

Not a word or look betrayed O'Connell's disappointment. He was too astute to let the world without, or even the circle of his own immediate followers, know that he had been tantalized with a few hours of triumph, and then summarily compelled to stand by. What he really thought of the transaction we shall never know; but that unresentfully and magnanimously he bore his mortification is beyond dispute. He retained his seat below the gangway on the Opposition side after the House reassembled, declaring that his future course would be governed by the composition of the Irish Executive. Lords Mulgrave and Morpeth might mean very well, but he had had enough of good intentions without their practical fulfilment; and remembering what had happened in 1830, he must wait until he saw further before enrolling himself as a supporter of the new Government. It was natural he should desire that, after a century and a half of exclusion, one of the ancient faith should be named chief of the Bar. Next to himself O'Loughlen had the highest reputation and greatest amount of business among Catholic lawyers; and having already served as Solicitor he had, *primâ facie*, the best claim to be made Attorney-General. O'Connell pressed earnestly for his friend's nomination.

At length the protracted doubts and misgivings came to an end, and early on the 18th of April the restored Premier wrote to the re-appointed President of the Council:—

"I have just received the King's acquiescence in the arrangements, expressed in terms which imply that he is upon the whole not dissatisfied with them, and he commands that everybody should be at St. James's at half-past two, in order to kiss hands, etc." ¹

On the same day the new Premier informed the House of Lords that the Administration was complete, with the exception of the Keepership of the Great Seal, which for the present would be held in commission. He reiterated succinctly and clearly the measures which would be submitted to Parliament during the session, of which the principal were those for the reform of municipal corporations in England, and for the extinction of Irish tithes. His tone was firm, but unprovocative of controversy. Party feelings ran too high to let the occasion pass for sharp questioning as to the policy of the new Cabinet. Lord Alvanley, a wit and man of fashion, read a letter lately published by O'Connell to the people of Ireland, in which he re-asserted his undiminished faith in the Repeal of the Union as the only certain remedy for the evils of that country; and as it had been publicly announced that he and his friends had agreed at Lichfield House to support ministers it was not unreasonable to ask what were the terms of the compact, and what were the opinions of the Government regarding the maintenance of the Empire. Brougham, impatient to play the new character he had assigned himself as spokesman-in-chief, and the protector of the party in power, rose to answer the question, but the peers would not endure his interference,

¹ From South Street, April 18th, 1835, MS.

and called for the First Minister. His reply was calm and unequivocal :—

“I am asked how far I coincide in the opinions of Mr. O’Connell about the Union with Ireland ; I answer, not at all. I am asked whether I am to have the aid of Mr. O’Connell ? I reply that I cannot tell. And, lastly on what terms ? I answer, I have made no terms with him whatever.”

In the Commons, as soon as the writ was moved for the County of Monaghan in the room of Mr. Perrin, who had accepted the office of Attorney-General for Ireland, O’Connell rose, and, followed by his son and other parliamentary friends, crossed the floor in token of his satisfaction, and took his seat on the ministerial side, a place he never quitted during the six ensuing years. The writ for Dungarvan, in the room of Mr. O’Loghlen, who again became Solicitor-General, was moved soon afterwards. The new Attorney-General was by some years the senior of his colleague in the profession, and there was a general feeling in Ireland that the self-denial which he had shown in refusing office deserved the recompense it had at length received.

Perrin was a grave and moderate man ; his utterance was slow and not always free from effort. To the praise of eloquence he did not aspire ; and, though keenly appreciative of the force and value of humour, as an advocate he seldom if ever indulged in its use ; but his words were weighty, his reasoning concise and clear. Great experience at the Bar had made him thoroughly aware of every fault and flaw in the administration of justice. For many years he had gone the North-East Circuit, which embraced the counties of Down, Antrim, and Armagh, where the traditional strife between Orangemen and Ribandmen led oftenest to breaches of the peace ; and one of his first acts, as Attorney-General, was to rescind the rule till then observed by the Crown prosecutors generally, to put aside Catholics when called on the jury panel, in cases involving party and religious feeling. He well knew that at the first such a change would probably entail failure to obtain convictions ; and he foresaw the ill use to be made of failure. But he never wavered, therefore, in his belief that this price must be paid for the more than compensating good of vindicating the administration of the law from the demoralising and destructive suspicion in the minds of the multitude, that the scales of justice were not true. “As long as that suspicion lasts,” he was often heard to say, “loyalty, except from the teeth out, you have no right to expect. If we Protestants, when accused rightly or wrongly of crime, were not allowed to have one of our own creed among the jurors, what sort of loyalists would we be ?” Melbourne entered heartily into this view, which may be regarded as embodying the fundamental principle on which the whole of the new administrative régime in Ireland was based. Its announcement was met with clamour, and subsequent adherence to it, on critical occasions, was made the ground of fierce political attack. But who would now think of going back ?

From many quarters the suggestion came that a new Under-Secretary should be appointed to carry out in detail the principles of the new policy. If a system of government, practically different from what had gone before, was to be tried, the whole mechanism ought to be in harmony, and the whole of its materials ought to be homogeneous. The hybrid system had proved a cunning folly, barren of good. If men were expected to have faith in the efficacy of the proposed experiment that impartial laws should be administered impartially, and that to loyalise a people the best way is to treat them as if they were loyal—doubt and distrust must not be kept alive by the retention in the confidential working of the Government of one who had been the trusted and faithful instrument of the repudiated method of rule. Sir William Gossett was an honourable man, who for seven years had administered the daily functions of the Executive under the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, and Sir Robert Peel, and he was never suspected of disobeying or neglecting their instructions. In the main their instructions were the same: to maintain authority, to discourage Orangeism, to punish Ribandism, to conciliate the gentry by courtesy and patronage, and to treat the ill-humour of the multitude with imperturbable contempt; discontent must be reproved as a social vice, and agitation as a political crime. How was an upright and sincere man who had been saying and doing all this for seven years to speak expressively another language and to enact effectively another rôle? Yet Melbourne hesitated. He had got on very well himself with Gossett when he was Home Secretary; he had found him diligent, punctual, and accurate, a gentleman, and a man who talked no nonsense; he knew all the ins and outs of the business of the Castle, who everybody was, and what the practice in each case had been. Why not let him stay, if for nothing else, to put Morpeth up to his work, and to keep Mulgrave from making mistakes about persons and things he had never seen before. In his indecision he sent for the new Attorney-General. Louis Perrin was exactly the man whose few words, clear thoughts, and earnest tone were likely to weigh with him in quiet council. His massive features, tardy gait, and slow utterance were all in keeping with the habit and ideas of the man descended from one of the Huguenots who had settled in Ireland, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He had, in common with other estimable off-shoots of the same stock, in the fine words of Grattan, "learnt the great lessons of liberty in the lair of oppression," and had vowed to take revenge for the injustice done their fathers by helping to break down the converse injustice in the land of their adoption. Firmly holding by the right of individual conscience, and fearlessly maintaining that there ought to be no peace or content in a country whose people in matters of creed and matters of opinion were not made to feel themselves equal in the eye of the law, they sympathised with O'Connell while they thought with Plunket. They were Whigs not Repealers; stubborn defenders of right and duty, but without national memories or passions. Perrin had

never mixed in agitation, or spent an hour in seeking popularity ; but he had refused office under previous Administrations because he would not be responsible for the provocation their inconsistent policy gave to disrespect for law. Now, for the first time he had hope that the long deferred promises of 1801 and 1829 would be fulfilled, and that, without loss of self-respect, men like himself might serve the Crown. In answer to the question why he thought it necessary that a new Under-Secretary should be made, he said in a low, earnest tone—"My Lord, he will be your right eye, and if we have to spend our time plucking old beams out of it, your Government will not go straight." This settled the question ; and Lord Spencer, having had fortunately sufficient knowledge of Thomas Drummond to believe in his capacity and fitness for the post, he was soon afterwards appointed, Sir William Gossett being given the easier and more lucrative place of Sergeant-at-Arms.

It must be owned that the choice was venturous. Drummond was unconnected by family or education with a country he was to take an important part in governing, and his superiors in the department had had even less experience in it than himself. But unlike them he had served a long apprenticeship of the very best kind, during a period of thirteen years in different parts of Ireland. Engaged from the commencement in the active work of the Ordnance Survey, he had had rare opportunities of observing dispassionately the actual condition of the country and its people. He had gone to Ireland open-hearted, clear-headed, and highly accomplished, without distracting prejudices or antecedents, and with the duty before him of measuring and marking every characteristic feature, territorial boundary and line of demarcation between waste and cultivation, creative industry and desponding idleness, which was a splendid course of study for an ardent and aspiring mind, and nobly he made use of its opportunities. It was necessary to talk to him when Under-Secretary about the practical remedies for practical evils by legislative or administrative means to estimate the variety of his intimate knowledge of circumstances requiring to be considered, and his readiness of resource. Melbourne said truly of Perrin that he had less of the Irishman about him than any one he had ever known ; it might with equal truth be said of Drummond that he had become more patriotically devoted to the interests of his adopted country than half her sons born in the land.

When complete the Administration stood thus :—

Viscount Melbourne . . .	<i>First Lord of the Treasury.</i>
Marquis of Lansdowne . .	<i>President of the Council.</i>
Lord Duncannon	<i>Privy Seal.</i>
T. Spring Rice	<i>Chancellor of Exchequer.</i>
Lord J. Russell	<i>Home Secretary.</i>
Viscount Palmerston . . .	<i>Foreign Secretary.</i>
Lord Glenelg	<i>Colonial Secretary.</i>

Lord Holland	<i>Duchy of Lancaster.</i>
Sir J. C. Hobhouse	<i>President of India Board.</i>
Earl of Auckland	<i>First Lord of Admiralty.</i>
C. Poulett Thomson	<i>President of Board of Trade.</i>
Viscount Howick	<i>Secretary at War.</i>

Not in the Cabinet—

Marquis Conyngham	<i>Lord Chamberlain.</i>
Lord C. Fitzroy	<i>Vice Chamberlain.</i>
Duke of Argyll	<i>Lord Steward.</i>
Earl of Lichfield	<i>Postmaster-General.</i>
Earl of Albemarle	<i>Master of the Horse.</i>
Mr. Labouchere	<i>Master of the Mint.</i>
Hon. G. S. Byng	<i>Comptroller of the Household.</i>
E. J. Stanley }	<i>Secretaries of the Treasury.</i>
Francis Baring }	
Sir John Campbell	<i>Attorney-General.</i>
Sir C. Rolfe	<i>Solicitor-General.</i>
Earl of Erroll	<i>Master of the Buckhounds.</i>
Sir H. Vivian	<i>Master-General of the Ordnance.</i>
Sir H. Parnell	<i>Treasurer of the Navy.</i>
Charles Wood	<i>Secretary of the Admiralty.</i>

Ireland.

Earl of Mulgrave	<i>Lord Lieutenant.</i>
Lord Plunket	<i>Lord Chancellor.</i>
Viscount Morpeth	<i>Chief Secretary.</i>
Mr. Perrin	<i>Attorney-General.</i>
Mr. O'Loughlen	<i>Solicitor-General.</i>
Mr. Drummond	<i>Under-Secretary.</i>

Scotland.

Mr. J. A. Murray	<i>Lord Advocate.</i>
Mr. Cunninghame	<i>Solicitor-General.</i>
Sir Rufane Donkin	<i>Surveyor-Gen. of Ordnance.</i>
Sir A. Leith Hay	<i>Clerk of Ordnance.</i>
Col. G. Anson	<i>Storekeeper of Ordnance.</i>

Lords of the Treasury.

Lord Seymour.	Mr. R. More O'Ferrall.
Mr. Ord.	Mr. R. Stuart.

Lords of the Admiralty.

Lord Dalmeny.	Sir E. T. Trowbridge.
Sir W. Parker.	Hon. G. Elliott.
Sir Charles Adam.	

Lords in Waiting.

Marquis of Headford.	Viscount Ashbrook.
Marquis of Queensberry.	Lord Byron.
Lord James O'Brien.	Lord Templemore.
Lord Adolphus Fitz-Clarence.	Lord Torrington.
Earl of Fife.	Lord Gardner.
Viscount Falkland.	Lord Elphinstone.

Hon. Fox Maule	<i>Under-Secretary, Home.</i>
Hon. T. F. Strangways . .	<i>Under-Secretary, Foreign.</i>
Sir George Grey	<i>Under-Secretary, Colonial.</i>
R. Cutlar Fergusson . . .	<i>Judge-Advocate.</i>

CHAPTER XXV.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE KING AND THE PEERS.

Governor-Generalship of India—Speech on Irish Church—Discontent of William IV.—Policy of Russia—Municipal Reform—Letter from Lord Ashburton.

ONE of the first questions the new Cabinet had to consider was whether the recent appointment of Lord Heytesbury to the Governorship of India should be superseded or confirmed. Sir John Hobhouse was induced to believe that this, the most splendid prize in the gift of the Executive, had been given away after his predecessor knew that his own official existence was virtually at an end; and that Lord Heytesbury had hastened his departure from England in order to lessen the chances of his nomination being cancelled. Acting upon this impression he at once proposed his recall, and his colleagues acquiescing, a fast sailing vessel overtook the new Viceroy at Lisbon; and on his return to England, Lord Auckland was named in his stead. The chairman and deputy-chairman of the Board of Directors grumbled, and the King did not pretend to approve. But on the morrow of party triumph the spoils are for the victors: and it is unhappily too true that the highest trusts in India have generally been treated on all sides as among the honours and rewards of party battle rather than as sacred trusts to be filled up solely with reference to the previously proven fitness of each new trustee. Lord Heytesbury was a sensible, cautious, and painstaking man, efficient rather than distinguished as a diplomatist. Lord Auckland was a man of good parts, highly cultivated, intelligent, and astute; everybody who knew him liked him, and being needy, complaisant, and without prejudices, it was believed that he would work well in harness fashioned at home, and keep clear of quarrels with the natives about religion or race. More competent

men than either had the chief places of rule over the great dependency, without incurring the jealousy of those who nominated them. There was at the time an indolent illusion that the conquest had reached its limits, and that the fear of increasing permanent debt or confessing yearly deficits, would effectually prevent fresh wars for the purpose of territorial acquisition. But it was confidently stated that neither the Tory nor the Whig peer possessed even a superficial knowledge of the mysteries or miseries, the necessities or the resources of Southern Asia. Metcalf, who had spent his life there, and devoted every energy and every hour of it to the study of the great problem how India ought to be governed, had been left, as *locum tenens*, at Calcutta by Lord William Bentinck. He would have been beyond compare the fittest man for the post, but, as he said himself, the only thing he could make out for certain in the whole matter was, that neither Conservatives nor Liberals at home had ever thought of him. Read by the light of subsequent events, Lord Heytesbury's friends were fairly entitled to say that he would have done better as Governor-General than his supersessor, and that therefore he ought not to have been recalled. But his subsequent viceroyalty of Ireland did not bring out strikingly any of the rare administrative qualities with which Sir Robert Peel would, it is said, have credited him. With many months of warning that famine was at hand, he left the country wholly unprepared to meet that dire calamity, either as regarded measures of employment or measures of relief; and the affliction was certainly enhanced thereby. But, whatever his good qualities or shortcomings may have been, it must be owned that Lord Auckland was a bad appointment. He had not earned it by any services worth naming: he did not vindicate it by the display of any qualities worth recording. The mistaken partiality of Lansdowne, and the party zeal of Hobhouse and Palmerston blinded them to his unsuitability for so arduous a post, and misled them into urging his appointment. But Melbourne must bear his share of the responsibility in having added one more to the long list of evil precedents of which our Indian and Colonial chronicles are full.

Brougham lost no time in cutting out work for himself. In his place in the House of Lords, he spoke a pamphlet full of characteristic vivacity and vigour, giving his reasons for propounding a scheme of primary instruction, of which the outlines were drawn in nine resolutions, of the widest if not the wisest comprehensiveness of the objects in view. To the general expression regarding the duty of Parliament to provide the means of elementary education for the children of toil, the Premier readily assented. But his habitual circumspection bade him to beware of accepting pledges whose redemption, in his day, seemed of doubtful possibility.

To the first resolution he had no objection, except that it stated positively facts with the truth of which he was unacquainted; nor to the second, third, fourth, or fifth, if it were understood that they were only to be acted upon as far as the funds provided by Parliament would

allow. The sixth appeared to him very large, and to pledge the Government to do much, but the principle of it was right, and he thought the establishment in the first instance of one of the seminaries for the instruction of schoolmasters would be sufficient. It must also be considered how it was to be done, and they would be met, as in all parts of the plan, by religious differences and difficulties. The eighth and ninth resolutions were of a very serious character. He agreed in most of the statements in them, but surely it would be unwise for either House of Parliament to pledge itself by resolution to principles which it might find itself hereafter unable or unwilling to carry into effect. He thought they would be afraid to produce these resolutions in the shape of a bill.¹

Brougham had accomplished all he wanted by expounding his scheme ; and Melbourne, who truly discerned its utter prematurity in the existing temper of the Opposition, quietly allowed the question to stand over to a more convenient season. Just five-and-thirty years later it arrived, after he and Brougham and all their chief opponents had been gathered to the tomb.

In redemption of the pledge on which ministers had ousted their opponents, a bill for the settlement of Irish Tithes, containing the appropriation clause, was carried through the Lower House in the course of July, and brought up to the Lords. Melbourne thought it the most fitting occasion to set forth fully the principles and convictions on which the government of Ireland was to be carried on ; and in moving the second reading he delivered a speech carefully and deliberately prepared, and which he intended to be a manifesto of his Irish administration :—

“ It now becomes my duty to attempt to induce your Lordships to make another effort for the final settlement of the question of tithes in Ireland, a subject which has given rise to so much trouble, vexation, and evil, which has produced that unfortunate disregard and contempt of the law that has now for so long a period prevailed in that country. I am now called upon to attempt to persuade your Lordships to make another effort, in order, to use the language of the petition which has been presented, and which is signed by so many of the prelates of the Established Church, to restore tranquillity to that disturbed portion of his Majesty’s dominions. Lest I should forget it your Lordships will perhaps allow me to say, with respect to that petition presented by the most rev. prelate at the head of the Church, and just now read at length, that I do not think it fairly represents the object of the bill ; neither can I agree in the language in which the petition is couched, nor in the consequences which it anticipates from the measure. At the same time, although I disagree with the objections urged in that petition, I do not consider them to be unfairly stated, nor do I take exception to any part of that document, except to those imputations which are cast by it upon the practice and opinions of the

¹ Confidential letter, June 19th, 1835, MS.

Roman Catholic Church. Language of such a character as the following should not be employed on such an occasion nor directed to such an object : 'in a land where disaffection to the British name, contempt of legal authority, and blind obedience to the Papal See, appear in their undisguised forms.' This, my Lords, is not charity and conciliation, nor are these the expressions which the ministers of our religion should hold towards those who profess another faith ; it is language totally unbecoming and uncharitable. It is in the highest degree impolitic and more particularly inconsistent with the statements generally made, and the opinions held and professed on that subject. You charge the Roman Catholics with superstition, with implicit obedience, with an unreasoning adherence to error, and with a blind submission to their priesthood. Recollect the more superstitious a religion is the more unreasoning and tenacious is the attachment and devotion of its adherents ; the more impatient are they of anything in the shape of contumely or insult, and if you employ any weapon of this description, you do your utmost to counteract your own objects, and to build up insuperable obstacles to your own success. Your Lordships will forgive me if I repeat a very old story from a very ancient historian upon this subject, a story which has always appeared to me to be pregnant with wisdom, delivered in a form striking and impressive from its simplicity. It is said by Herodotus, that it was a question in those times, whether the crimes and extravagancies of Cambyzes, the conqueror of Egypt, were to be attributed to malignity of disposition or to derangement of intellect. 'For my part,' concludes the historian, 'I consider him to have been mad : and for this single reason, that being anxious to establish his dominion and power in Egypt, he yet outraged and insulted the religious feelings of the Egyptians.' Depend upon it, those who are anxious to establish their influence in any country, ought not to begin by offending the religion of the majority of the community."

After pointing out that the opposition to taxes in the nature of tithes was not confined to Ireland, but was then epidemic in Europe, Melbourne continued :—

"MY LORDS,—I know I shall be told, as has been set forth in the petition of the right rev. prelates just read to your Lordships, that the tithe is an original charge upon the land ; that it is, in fact, part of the property, of which the tithe receiver is a part owner, and not an incumbrancer. Political economists wish to prove that it is paid not by the proprietor of the land but by the consumer of the produce. Both these positions may be true ; and I believe they are so. But every statesman of a mind at once inventive and practical, will consider, with respect to every measure, and particularly with respect to matters of finance and pecuniary charge, that there are two material considerations to be kept in view, the fiscal effect of a measure, and its moral effect. In imposing a tax it is most important to be certain in what quarter the burden of it really falls ; it is hardly less essential to consider, where it is thought and believed to fall ; and, my Lords,

your Lordships may establish clearly that the tithe is a tenth part of the produce belonging originally to one party, whilst the other nine parts belong to another ; or you may prove, by the most conclusive train of reasoning, that the tithe is not paid by the tenant of the land, who appears to pay it, but is paid by the consumers in the price of the produce. You may reason to this effect so long as you please ; you may illustrate it by the most felicitous examples ; you may elucidate it by the clearest deductions ; you may place it before the people in the most easy and popular form ; but you will never persuade the bulk of mankind that it is not paid by those who give the produce, or lay down the money in the first instance ; and that the burden does not really fall, where, according to common sense, according to the eyes and ears it appears to fall."

The speaker having then gone in detail through the various provisions of the bill, stated that the principal ground on which he rested it was the anomalous, and paradoxical state of the Established Church in Ireland, with relation to the population of that country :—

"MY LORDS,—I have often had occasion to state that the circumstance of a great Protestant Establishment in the midst of a great Catholic population must be productive of great difficulties ; such difficulties have existed at all times, since the existence of the anomaly which I have noticed. The responsibility of this state of things, we, in our complacency and self-approbation, are very apt to cast upon the conduct of those who have gone before us ; upon the centuries during which we acknowledged that Ireland had been subjected to every form and mode of misrule and bad government. In our vanity we sit in judgment and pronounce very absolute condemnation upon the measures and conduct of former kings, former ministers, former parliaments, and former generals. We are perpetually exclaiming, This was wrong and that was wrong ; he should have done this ; he should have done that ; what blindness to pursue this line of policy ! what an erroneous judgment to adopt these measures ! Why, my Lords, it is probable that if those whom we so positively condemn, were here to defend themselves, it is probable, I say, that they would be able to show in one sentence, perhaps in one word, that we know nothing about the matter, and that amidst the prejudices which then prevailed, under the influences to which they were subjected, in the general state of circumstances by which they were surrounded, they could in fact pursue no other course than that which they did pursue—and most certainly upon this question of religion and religious establishment, they would have something to say for themselves, something to urge in their own defence and on their own behalf. They would say, A Roman Catholic population and a Protestant Establishment is a state of things which we never either contemplated or intended ; our policy might be violent, our measures might be cruel, our objects might be impracticable ; but still we had definite and reasonable objects in view. We intended the eradication of the Roman Catholic and the substitution of the Protestant faith—such was our end, and such our

means from the reign of Henry VIII. down to the enactment of the Penal Code. If you abandon our policy, as you have done, you must abandon it entirely, and you must adopt not only a different, but precisely the opposite course."

He then alluded to the difficulties in which this anomalous state of ecclesiastical affairs had involved the Government, but contended that the maintenance of a large Protestant Establishment where there was a small or no Protestant population was not consistent with any principle or policy:—

"What character does a Protestant clergyman (under such circumstances) bear? Pastor he is not, for he has no flock to tend, no cure of souls; missionary he is not—he cannot be an effectual missionary, because he is not disinterested—he has no part of the character which belongs to and constitutes a missionary to convert the heathen; but supposing he is considered as a missionary, I must say, referring to what has been stated in the petition from the Protestant prelates of Ireland which has been presented this evening, and in which stress has been laid on the gross superstition of the Catholic Church, that much as I may lament the great errors of that Church, and much as I may deprecate some of its doctrines, yet I, grounding myself upon the authority of the prudent and tolerant doctrines delivered by the reverend prelate at the head of our Church, upon a former evening, assert that the main opinions of that Church, being essentially the same as those of our own, it is not fitting to treat the Roman Catholics with insult, as if they were worshippers of Juggernaut, or the votaries of any other barbarous superstition. At the same time, my Lords, that I propose this measure, I am fully aware of the effects which it will produce, and of the objections which may be urged against it. I am deeply sensible and much concerned at the impression which I feel that it will make. I cannot conceal from myself that it will be, in the first instance and for a certain time, a heavy blow and a great discouragement to Protestantism in Ireland; that it will be also a great triumph to the adverse party. I am well aware that it is not the same thing to destroy as never to have constituted; to demolish as never to have built up; but this evil, which I trust will be but temporary, is forced upon me by the untoward circumstances which I have already described. I cannot avoid it, and that which I cannot avoid I must submit to with as much patience as I can command, and temper with as much remedy and alteration as it is in my power to administer. I beg your Lordships to weigh well the responsibility under which you are acting. I beg you to consider that you stand at the head of a great and mighty empire, an empire greater than has existed since the downfall of Rome, and that its future destinies are committed to your charge. It is now many years since Mr. Burke, imitating the great orators of antiquity, exclaimed, in Parliament, 'We may have rivals; we may have enemies: I do not fear the power of our rivals; I do not fear the greatness of those enemies; but there is one thing which I do fear, and that is our own power and our own

greatness. Our Indian empire is an awful thing.' Since that time not only that empire in India, but the whole of our territories have swelled, and been increased and augmented by acquisition, by conquest, and by their own internal growth and expansion. With an empire so vast, extended, and scattered in every part of the globe, and containing within its very bosom every form of government, every code of law, every modification of society, and every race and condition of man—it is impossible to expect that there ever should arrive a time when there will not exist in some part of such vast dominions some circumstance which creates uneasiness and alarm. I may, my Lords, be sanguine; I may be short-sighted; perhaps both; but it appears to me at present there is as little ground for serious apprehension, as little probability of the occurrence of trouble or danger, as it is possible at any time to look forward to. I see nothing to fear except our own differences and dissensions, and these, I cannot conceal it from your Lordships, I look upon not without real and grave alarm. In this state of affairs I propose to you this measure. I pray you to consider it without any narrow views, and casting away from you all prejudices. I pray you to consider it with reference to the extent of that great empire, the affairs of which you have to administer, and which by sound and enlightened policy may be maintained and aggrandized, but the safety and continuance of which cannot be secured, unless you legislate according to the interests and feelings which prevail in each constituent part of his Majesty's dominions."

But no argument or eloquence could avail, and the bill was rejected by the Peers.

Lord Cloncurry, always accessible and good-natured, wrote to the minister representing the services and claims of W. H. Curran and A. R. Blake; he recommended the promotion of the former to the Chief Commissionership of Insolvency; and that the latter, who held the place of Chief Remembrancer of the Exchequer, should be made a Privy Councillor. He likewise drew attention to the character and standing of Robert Holmes, one of the most learned, eloquent, and independent men of his time, but who had been hitherto dissociated, it was supposed, from the party in office by reason of the enmity existing between him and the Irish Chancellor. The Premier replied that the persons mentioned had not been neglected: an offer of advancement had been made to Mr. Holmes, which had been declined; there would be some difficulty in arranging Curran's succeeding Burrowes; "but what could they possibly do for Blake? Making him a Privy Councillor was nonsense: he would be a noodle to wish it. There were, in his opinion, objections; and if he got it, depend upon it it would not give him three hours' gratification."¹

This was an instance of his way of thinking aloud and committing himself in conversation or on paper to first impressions, which on reconsideration he cheerfully retracted. Mr. Blake was anything but

¹ Letter, June 4th, 1835.

a noodle ; and as up to the period in question no Catholic had been admitted a member of the Privy Council, it was very far from nonsense to desire that this important exclusion should be broken down. When put in its true aspect the minister frankly owned the importance of the question, and Mr. Blake, with others of his creed, were added to the list of those who were entitled to prefix Right Honourable to their names. In due time Mr. Curran obtained the professional advancement he desired. At the suggestion of the new Attorney-General, and with the unreserved approval of the Chancellor, who disclaimed earnestly the wish to exclude Mr. Holmes from any honour or dignity of his profession, an endeavour was made by the Vicefroy to induce him to accept the distinction of Sergeant ; which in Ireland is limited to three members of the inner Bar, and is generally understood to lead to the appointment of Solicitor-General. Lord Mulgrave pressed the complimentary office upon him, saying that the Government wished to strengthen itself by the adhesion of men like him, and hoped for the benefit of his services ere long as an adviser of the Crown. He replied courteously but coldly that he had no wish for office. " But you have already assisted us by consenting in 1831 to be a member of the National Education Board." He laughed grimly and said : " Yes, my Lord, I thought the people wanted education, but I don't think I want promotion." Early in life he was the intimate friend of the ill-fated Robert Emmett, whose sister he had married not very long before the attempt at revolt in 1803, fatally identified with his name. Holmes and some others were arrested on suspicion ; and the Habeas Corpus being suspended they were kept in strict confinement without trial or definite accusation until the following year. When looking through the bars of his prison chamber in Bedford Tower he was shot at by a sentry of one of the fencible regiments then on guard. The murderous bullet narrowly missed its aim, striking the mullion of the lattice close beside him. A letter written on the instant to the Viceroy described and denounced his ill-treatment so forcibly that Lord Whitworth was moved ; and like his pro-consular prototype of old, sent for him that he might for himself hear and see the man whom bonds could not bow to mute or mock submission. His Excellency inquired if he had not been the relation and confidant of Emmett. " I was his friend and relation," he said firmly, " but if I had been in his confidence I would not have been taken in my bed." His interrogator failed to draw anything from him, but calm and laconic protests against the injustice of his prolonged captivity. After he was suffered to withdraw Lord Whitworth exclaimed : " This is an honest, and I believe a loyal man," and the order of release was forthwith signed. Then, for the first time he learned the sad details of the memorable trial, in which his infatuated kinsman hardly contravened the charge of treason, but sought to clear the memory of his desperate enterprise from the reproach of wantonness or recklessness of human life, in language which after seventy years has not ceased to ring in the popular ear. So little of controversy characterised the proceedings that

the relentless judge who presided would have dispensed with any lengthened comment on the evidence by counsel for the prosecution. The work of supererogation devolved, unhappily for his fame, on Plunket, who had been intimate in earlier days with Emmett's family, but who did not shrink from urging on the jury, and through them upon the community at large, the fearful responsibility which an enthusiast, however single-minded, incurs who calls an ignorant and impoverished multitude to arms. The cause of authority was not served by this pitiless demand for exemplary justice. The best friends of Plunket would gladly have it forgotten; it probably added not a feather's weight in the scale of condemnation; but by Holmes it never was forgiven. He resumed his profession, where he soon made a name for learning, intrepidity, and discretion. Though he never took any part in active politics, an attempt was made by Mr. Joy and others to exclude him from the circuit mess on account of his opinions; but to the credit of the Bar it failed. Mr. Joy subsequently owned that he had been in the wrong, and Holmes readily resumed the terms of old companionship with him. But to Plunket he would never give his hand, or accept from him the offer of a silk gown. While he was struggling to the front the judgment-seat was frequently profaned by manifestations of political aversion. And the most shameless offender in this respect was Chief Justice Norbury, who, when remonstrated with repeatedly in the course of a trial for libel, by Mr. Holmes, for admitting statements that in point of law were not evidence, ruthlessly muttered that many a traitor had been sent to a scaffold on no better testimony. "I don't pretend to say that many an innocent man has not suffered on this sort of proof; all I contend for is that it would not be evidence in an action on a bill of exchange." Melbourne was made fully aware of the inflexible rectitude and solid worth of the man, and he would gladly have done him honour. But no blandishments or arguments could make Holmes exchange the garb of life-long independence for the livery of power.

The First Minister did his best to allay the irritation which his restoration caused the King. In the transaction of business his rare command of features, tone, and pleasant idiomatic phrase enabled him generally to smooth difficulties, quiet fears, and charm away the evil spirit of distrust. He had won the game of power, and it was not in his nature to betray the least degree of exultation. He made great allowance for the weakness of wounded pride, and the fretfulness of declining years. William IV. had shown him little consideration: he would requite by showing more than was expected of him. Whether the peevish and desponding sovereign appreciated fully the conduct of the statesman is more than doubtful. Towards him individually when alone admitted to the Closet he was not ungracious or unkind, but towards other members of the Cabinet his words were full of heat, and his demeanour sometimes almost hostile. On subjects connected with national defence he was peculiarly excitable; the militia had, he said, been too long neglected. George II. had disfavoured it, preferring

foreign mercenaries ; but George III. liked the militia, and so did he. He thought it would be an excellent measure to embody them. 'The Home Secretary told him Parliament did not fear invasion, and would not therefore agree to the expense. He said, "he did, and thought those who objected to preparations on the ground of cost were penny wise and pound foolish. He heard that Russia had one hundred thousand men ready for embarkation in the Baltic ; he did not know how his Lordship felt, but he owned they made him shake in his shoes."¹ The subject frequently recurred, and was calculated to cause uneasiness in those to whom such language was addressed. Melbourne, who knew him long and well, said it was temper, not political purpose ; and he pointed to the military estimates of Peel, three months before, which were less in the number of men asked for, than for twenty years preceding. His Majesty seldom, if ever, indulged in these ebullitions when alone with Melbourne or Palmerston. He reserved the overflow of his misgivings for others, among whom was the mild and diffident Secretary for the Colonies ; and matters at length went so far that it seemed doubtful whether it would be possible to carry on safely and with decorum, the business of government. Ministers were bound by their oath to keep secret the errors as well as counsels of the Crown ; but what if the circle were capriciously enlarged, and subordinate functionaries were exposed to similar explosions of wrath ? The First Minister felt moreover that though for himself he might forgive and try to forget the petulance and perversity he deplored, he had no right to keep in ignorance the men who had agreed to have him for their chief ; with whom jointly and severally he had undertaken the guardianship of the state ; but the custody of whose honour and the exercise of whose discretion had not been unconditionally placed in his hands. There was risk of disunion and disheartenment from directing attention to quicksands below the surface which it did not seem easy to avoid ; but the risk must be run, for confidence so critical he could not withhold.

Lord Gosford, a man of excellent character and judgment, had been named Governor of Canada ; and no objection had been raised to his appointment. At a meeting of the Cabinet on the 11th of July, Melbourne addressed his colleagues : "Gentlemen, you may as well know how you stand," and then proceeded to read a memorandum of a conversation after the review the day before, between Lord Gosford and the King. His Majesty said, "Mind what you are about in Canada. By — I will never consent to alienate the Crown lands, nor to make the Council elective. Mind me, my Lord, the Cabinet is not my Cabinet ; they had better take care, or, by —, I will have them impeached. You are a gentleman I believe, I have no fear of you ; but take care what you do."² The ministers present stared at one another, but agreed that it was better to take no notice of what had occurred, and see if the excitement would pass away. The same

¹ Hobhouse, vol. iii. p. 142, June 26th. First quoted in the *Edinburgh Review*.

² Hobhouse's 'Recollections,' vol. iii.

day he gave excellent advice to M. Dedel, the Dutch Minister, bidding him let the King of Holland know that he was ignorant of his true position, and that Belgium was lost irrecoverably. Lord Gosford was assured of the confidence of those who were responsible for his appointment, and was advised to proceed on his difficult mission without delay. The royal assent had about the same time been obtained in writing to the introduction of the Irish Tithe Bill, which contained the disputed Appropriation Clause ; and there was no other legislative question on which difficulty seemed likely to arise. Hobhouse owns that though he was uniformly treated with kindness and consideration in audience on the affairs of his department, he shared at times the doubts of others whether incivilities that appeared gratuitous and unseemly were not prompted in some degree by a hope that they might provoke resignations and lead thereby to a break up of the Government. Lord Frederick FitzClarence, who saw with concern from day to day all that was going on, told him that his father had much to bear, being beset by the Duke of Cumberland and the Duchess of Gloucester by day, and by the Queen at night. "It seemed clear to me that if we continued in office it would be entirely owing to the good sense and good manners of our chief, who knew how to deal with his master, as well as with his colleagues, and never, that I saw, made a mistake in regard to either. I must add, that when a stand was to be made on anything considered to be a vital principle of his Government he was as firm as a rock."¹

Lord Gosford was advised to take no notice of what had passed, and abide by his instructions, which would be specific and clear. When these were first submitted for approval, his Majesty broke out violently against the use of certain words, saying, "No ! my Lord, I will not have that word ; strike out 'conciliatory' ; strike out 'liberal.'" And then he added, "You cannot wonder at my making these difficulties with a Ministry that has been forced upon me." However, as Glenelg went on reading, his Majesty got more calm. He approved of what was said about the Legislative Council, and the territorial revenues. In short, he approved of the instructions generally on that day, and also on the following Monday ; but when Glenelg went into the Closet two days after, he was very sulky and indeed rude ; and objected to some things to which he had previously consented. Melbourne was told by Glenelg how he had been treated, and when he went in, the King said he hoped he had not been uncivil to Lord Glenelg, on which the First Minister made only a stiff bow. The King took the reproof most becomingly ; for when Glenelg went in a second time, his Majesty was exceedingly kind to him, and said he "approved of every word of the instructions," and remarked that he was not like William III., who often signed what he did not approve. He would not do that, he was not disposed to infringe on the liberty of any of his subjects, but he must preserve his own prerogative.² The

¹ Hobhouse.

² Hobhouse, 5th July.

storm being over the afternoon proved more serene. At the Council all was sunshine ; and though the Chief Justice Denman being detained at Guildhall, kept the King waiting a long while, he received his apologies when he came very kindly, asked where he lived, and invited him to Windsor, adding, when he had gone through the Records' Report, " I hope you won't hang *me*, my Lord."¹

With a view to economy it was proposed by the War department to reduce the permanent staff of the militia, which for some time had been by successive Governments allowed to remain little more than a nominal force, neither the Duke of Wellington nor Lord Hill being disposed to recommend its increase or embodiment, and choosing rather to rely when necessary upon more extensive enlistment for the line. William IV. had however become possessed with the idea that it was indispensable to the safety of the realm to resuscitate the ancient means of local armament. Upon various occasions he had sought to impress this view upon his Ministers, without evoking any other than the sort of deferential acquiescence which practically implied nothing. His Majesty was led to believe that his patriotic suggestions were merely trifled with ; and when his assent was asked in Council to the proposal for the further reduction of the militia staff, he was much excited, and exclaimed with great vehemence :—

" Nothing should induce me to assent to this, but for two reasons ; one is that I do not wish to expose those colonels who have deserted their duty and done so much to injure this constitutional force ; the other is that I am resolved the system shall be put upon a better footing next session of Parliament. My Lords, I am an old man—older than any of your Lordships—I therefore know more than any of you. In 1756, George II. had as I have now, what was called a Whig Ministry ; that Ministry originated a Militia Bill, to form a constitutional defence of the kingdom. George II. had not the advantages which his successors possessed. He opposed the bill, and he was seconded by certain persons in different counties, some from one motive, some from another, perhaps subserviency ; but his ministers wisely persevered and carried their measure ; since which time, this great force has been kept up as it ought to be, and shall be, in spite of agitators in Ireland and agitators in England ; for, my Lords, I dread to think what might be the consequences if Russia were to attack us unprepared. I say I never will consent to the destruction of this force, and early in the next session of Parliament, whoever may be, and whoever are, ministers, I will have the militia restored to a proper state. I say this, not only before my confidential advisers, but before others (Charles Greville and two or three others of the household) because I wish to have my sentiments known. Such was the substance and in great part the very words of his Majesty's harangue. We looked at one another. Lord Melbourne was very black and very haughty ; I thought he would have broken out."² He preserved, however, his self-

¹ Idem.

² Hobhouse, July 16th.

control, and thereby escaped the mischief and scandal of an altercation, which once begun must have ended either in a humiliating retraction on the part of the King, or in a second attempt within twelve months to get rid of an Administration having the confidence of the House of Commons. Melbourne was at heart a royalist, and deplored every act of unwisdom and every rash speech tending to lower the Crown in the estimation of the people. The declaration that his Majesty wished his treatment of his responsible advisers to be generally known might have provoked, if it did not justify disclosures that would have raised public excitement to the highest pitch and stimulated passions and expedients of which few were dreaming. The cry for economy had indeed somewhat abated with improving times ; but it was still recognised as one pre-eminently just, by Parliament and the press ; and as already observed, none had gone greater lengths in cutting down military expenditure than the Conservative Cabinet recently displaced. Melbourne, Palmerston, Lansdowne, and others, had, in point of feeling, as little sympathy with a policy of parsimony where national interests were supposed to be in peril, as any men of their day ; and had William IV., instead of indulging in passionate utterances on all sorts of questions, that seemed to betray personal resentment and party aims, with gravity and courtesy urged his views respecting a home guard, and the expediency of taking the opinion of naval and military authorities on the best mode of national defence, his suggestions would have been received without distrust, and would probably have led to the earlier adoption of measures eventually deemed expedient. How far the royal fears of invasion might have been confirmed it is hard to tell ; but it is remarkable that fifteen years later, Wellington and Peel, Palmerston and Russell, concurred in having recourse to a reorganised militia in order to tranquillise alarms of a sudden descent upon the coast from a different quarter. At the next cabinet dinner, at Poulett Thomson's, the Premier read a strong letter from his Majesty on the aggressive designs of the Czar. Parliament ought to be asked, he said, for 3,000 additional seamen ; and frankly told that the continued encroachments of Russia warranted this demand. Lord Durham, he hoped, would not be deluded by bland assurances at St. Petersburg. In forcible terms the speech of the Emperor at Warsaw to the Polish Deputation was condemned, rendering as it did the provisions of the treaty of Vienna no better than waste paper. It was likewise hinted that in the next speech from the throne something should be said regarding Russian schemes of aggrandisement.¹ The Foreign Secretary, and the First Minister were at no loss as to the source whence these ideas had been originally derived. As was said on another occasion by Spring Rice with reference to the late Lord Derby, "they knew the click of the gun, and the sharpness of the fire." The Duke of Wellington had but lately ceased to advise the Sovereign.

¹ Hobhouse, iii. 177.

confidentially as Secretary for Foreign Affairs ; and though scrupulously abstinent in tendering advice when not in office upon matters of administration or patronage, he never shrank from stating his opinion when asked regarding the external relations of the country. Later on, a signal instance will be given of how completely in his mind the abiding sense of national duty superseded all considerations of party or personal jealousy. Meanwhile, he was at little pains to conceal the impressions he had brought back from the Muscovite capital ten years before. He had been sent to obtain the adhesion of Russia to the Treaty of London for the liberation of Greece ; and in that object he was successful. But his calm insight into motives and professions reflected in its clear depths dark foreshadowings of danger to European freedom. It was too soon for him to forget the energetic efforts made in 1815 to put bounds to the territorial ambition of the only power which after the reduction of France within her ancient limits menaced the independence of other states. He had played a great part himself in the transactions which brought the allies to a general congress in the hope of securing renunciation by all of desolating schemes of encroachment. But before the arrangements were completed, distrust of the over-reaching ambition of Russia led to the secret preparation of a treaty of defensive alliance between England, France and Austria, which was furtively signed during a ball on the 3rd of January, 1815, in a bedroom at the British Embassy, by Talleyrand and Castlereagh.

Thus countermined, the sinister projects were laid aside and disowned, and no more was said about them. But though he kept distrust cropped close, it never was uprooted from his mind. In or out of power the greatness, influence, and glory of England as the natural friend of weaker states, and the objector-general to further aggrandisement by the strong, was the pride and purpose of his life. It had been proposed at Vienna that Poland should be reconstituted as a separate realm, with national institutions ; Alexander pledged himself to grant the latter, but refused to give up the crown. The local liberties of the partitioned state were solemnly guaranteed, but in practice they were never conceded. The Poles in despair had made an ineffectual attempt to gain their liberties in 1832, and their mutiny had been stamped out with rigour, unrelenting and unspeakable. Still it was hoped that magnanimity might be shown for the future, though mercy was refused for the past. Palmerston, with the sanction of Lord Grey and the approval of the Duke, had sought to intercede for the prostrate nation, invoking the pledge and the covenant of Vienna. But the Czar now declared that all claims to national rights and privileges were cancelled by rebellion, and that the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was thenceforth to be incorporated with the rest of his empire. Melbourne did not differ in feeling from the sentiments expressed in the letter of the King. And in a Cabinet some days later, he cordially supported Palmerston in offering an alliance with Austria and France to thwart the furtive projects, and to resist the encroaching tendencies

of Russia. Metternich declined, however, to enter into engagements that would offend the Emperor Nicholas ; and Louis Philippe was as little disposed to provoke his resentment. The proposed treaty thus fell to the ground ; and it was out of the question to bring in a supplementary estimate late in the session for raising an extra body of seamen, when no overt act had been committed in breach of the peace of nations. But thenceforth there are many traces of a common understanding between the chiefs of the two great opposing parties, with regard to the duty of watching with a jealous eye the covetous designs and undermining diplomacy of the Autocrat whose foreign policy no treaties could bind, and the sudden exercise of whose peremptory will throughout his vast domains, no law or legislature even in theory pretended to control. The Duke understood too well the character of the Sovereign, and had too high a sense of public honour to take advantage of any opportunities he may have had to disturb his mind with vague suggestions about foreign policy which could have no other effect than to inflame his discontent with his Whig ministers. But he gravely and consistently discountenanced the notion whenever his opinion was asked, whether by political opponent or political friend, that it was safe for an envied power like Great Britain to rely on the plausible professions of our rival for dominion in the East.

The bill to reform manifold abuses in English municipal corporations met with little opposition in the Lower House, where Sir Robert Peel signified his cordial acquiescence in its principle and scope. Lyndhurst took a different course in the Lords, whom he prevailed on to hear counsel at the Bar. Sir Charles Wetherell spoke in defence of vested wrongs and of impunity in jobbing more than twelve hours ; and witnesses were called to prove that self-election by small minorities in corporate towns was the better way of choosing chief magistrates and aldermen, while a monopoly of benefits and perquisites was the best mode of securing sound and pure local Government. The Premier, aided by Holland and Lansdowne, defended the proposed enactment zealously, and with the powerful aid of the ex-Chancellor, made a good fight in debate, though often beaten in division. An amendment preserving the rights of the freemen was carried by 130 to 37 ; the new qualification for burgesses was raised by a like majority ; Dissenters were declared ineligible to have any share in the disposal of ecclesiastical appointments ; and the existing aldermen and town-clerks were to be continued for life. The Duke of Richmond daily attended the protracted sittings in committee, in which the details of the bill were discussed, warmly supporting his late colleagues in concert with whom the commission had been issued, on whose report it was founded. No persuasion, however, could detain the bulk of the Liberal peers in town, and Lyndhurst exulted in carrying every alteration he proposed against insignificant minorities. Sir J. Campbell ventured once to expostulate with him on thus bringing the Two Houses into such direct antagonism by striking out clauses

which Peel himself had supported in the Commons. He replied, "Peel ! what is Peel to me ? D——n Peel !" ¹ Loud was the outcry at these proceedings, and considerable the apprehension if the Commons should refuse all compromise, of a dead lock in the progress of public business, and the renewal of fierce agitation throughout the country, certain to end in the further humiliation of the Peers. Counsels more truly conservative prevailed ; Lord John summoned a meeting of his supporters at Downing Street, in which he explained what amendments the Government would yield for the sake of peace, and what they would refuse. Hume was for no compromise ; O'Connell answered him with his usual tact and skill, recommending strongly that they should secure without delay the vast and solid privileges within their reach, and trust to time and better opportunity for winning the remainder. Sir Robert Peel, who had been for some days at Drayton, reappeared at the sitting of the House, and gave his warm support to the course recommended by Ministers. This settled the question. The Duke advised above eighty of his friends at Apsley House to yield. By way of breaking their fall, Lyndhurst engaged to execute minor mutilations. These in their turn evoked a new storm of protests and denunciations, and on the 7th of September, the Home Secretary called another meeting of his supporters to consider what should be done. Duncombe urged vehemently the policy of standing out, and undertook to furnish Lord John with a list of peers who would give in if ministers were only firm. Warburton and O'Connell concurred in rejecting his guarantee, which no one ventured to endorse. The new clause regarding justices of the peace was consequently admitted ; that for a redistribution of wards refused. The angry controversy was thus brought to an end ; and the Melbourne Cabinet had the satisfaction of seeing this firstfruit of their legislative labour garnered in the storehouse of useful reforms before the prorogation. Very few statutes of our time have wrought so great and valuable a change in the practical government of the country. It originated undoubtedly in the Grey Cabinet, but as undoubtedly the credit of carrying it belongs to that of Melbourne. He was himself much elated at the result of his first legislative campaign.

Brougham had striven indefatigably to aid in support of the Corporation Bill. On every point of law or usage, ancient principle or modern mal-practice, he was ready to encounter the specious objections of Lyndhurst. Their well-matched skill of fence amused Holland ; but it fretted and at last bored the Premier, who cared little for the cleverness displayed, and a great deal for the popular irritation it prolonged. When the struggle was over neither the champions nor the onlookers measured the result as he did. The imprudence of the Peers in wantonly staking their reputation and power on an issue which within a month they were forced to abandon, filled the minds of many with the notion that the days of the heredi-

¹ Life of Lyndhurst, p. 109.

tary chamber were numbered, and that some organic change was imminent in that part of the Constitution. Pamphlets, leading articles, after-dinner speeches, sarcastic letters, and reviews of new editions of Roman history applicable to the time contributed to produce a state of surmise, if not of real feeling, that Government could not go on much longer without a reform of the Lords. The Radical press and many of the Radical members mistook the superficial symptoms of the time. Instead of returning to Ireland when the session closed, O'Connell proceeded to the northern counties, and thence to Scotland, addressing everywhere vast multitudes on the political topics of the day. He offered to relinquish all further thoughts of repeal for the imperial purpose of abolishing the hereditary branch of the Legislature, to which he ascribed the continuance of those grievances of which Ireland especially complained. Tumultuous applause greeted him everywhere, and he became more especially the target at which every Conservative shaft was aimed. Hereplied in terms of unmeasured invective; vituperating by name several of his anonymous assailants. The din lasted for some weeks, and from sheer exhaustion ceased, leaving no practical result of any kind. Had he been content to reform and not to destroy the constitution of the Upper Chamber, the result might have been far different. In the following November, however, Sir Francis Burdett wrote a letter to the managers of Brooks's Club, calling for his expulsion because he persisted in attacking men of honour, with whom he would not fight. His reply appeared on the third of December justifying his conduct. The Committee refused to interfere in a matter which they deemed beyond their cognizance, whereupon Sir Francis withdrew his name from the club. Brougham, Graham, and Stanley did the same. Many of the Whigs, though they deprecated O'Connell's violence of language, believed in the imminence of organic change; and, strange as it appears to us now, many ardent Tories shared in their anticipation. They could not be persuaded that the overthrow of a ministry of resistance, followed by a coalition of the popular elements in Great Britain and Ireland, the self-imposed humiliation of the Lords in their legislative capacity, and the permanent enfranchisement and organisation of elective municipalities in the cities and towns of England and Wales, could end in peace and loyalty. It was only a question of months or perhaps years, but, sooner or later, "the concern must go." Melbourne took a very different view. What might have happened had the Lords been mad enough to persist in following the advice of Lyndhurst rather than that of Peel, and thrown out the Corporation Bill, nobody can tell. But the bill had been carried, not lost, which, in his discerning way of estimating affairs, made all the difference. He understood the country better than the Benthamites, who had proved long ago the power of the Lords to be illogical; or the rhetorical agitators, who believed that they could keep up the resentment of a money-making, comfort-loving, easy-going community, when the cause of quarrel was withdrawn. He had no apprehension for the stability

of the House of Lords. The effect that seemed to him inevitable from the ten-pound Parliamentary franchise and the household municipal suffrage taken together, was sectarian, not political :—

“You may not see all the consequences of this to-morrow ; but you have given by law a permanent power in all the centres of industry and intelligence to the Dissenters which they never had before, and which they never could have had otherwise. They are the classes who will really gain by the change, not the mob or the theorists ; every year their strength will be felt more and more at elections and their influence in legislation. Depend upon it, it is the Established Church, not the hereditary peerage, that has need to set its house in order.”¹

Half a century has come and gone since these fore-thoughtful words were spoken. And how have they been verified ?

Mr. Warburton had carried some amendments in Brougham’s bill for regulating patents, against which its sensitive and excitable author appealed to the head of the Government.

“MY DEAR M,— I have drawn up a memorandum for J. Russell and Rice. Anything more degrading for the Government than to let Wakley & Co. beat them and the Tories together on such a question I cannot conceive. All I have seen, except those two, were all clear and strong. But the Government being afraid to take a part keeps them in suspense. One word from the Government settles the case, and if they give not that the clause is lost. I shall explain again the whole matter—at least I shall not be to blame for its loss. This is, really, an occasion on which a Liberal Government might gain some credit, instead of sharing with the lowest of mankind the discredit of spoiling an excellent measure. It is on to-morrow (Friday).

“Yours, H. B.”

Melbourne inclosed his note with the commentary :—

“MY DEAR JOHN,— I send you a memorandum of Brougham’s upon the alterations which have been made by Warburton. I believe in his Patents Bill. He is extremely eager upon the subject, and in my opinion he is quite in the right. The more matters of this kind can be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the House of Lords, the better ; and this is a step. I suppose it is impossible to persuade Warburton to give way ; but it would be a good thing if you could do so.

“Yours faithfully,

“MELBOURNE.”²

The member for Bridport would not yield to the importunities of the Whip, and the House being nearly empty, the question was suffered to stand over till the Monday following. Mr. Tooke, himself a great authority in economics, then moved to leave out his amendment ; and prevailed by twenty-five votes to twenty-three.

With a view to the legislative redress of grievances of which Non-

¹ In conversation with an intimate friend.

² To Lord John Russell, September 4th, 1835, MS.

conformists complained, the First Minister addressed an official note to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Poulett Thomson, Hobhouse, and Howick, requesting them "to undertake the consideration of all the questions relating to the Dissenters, and to frame measures for the consideration of the Cabinet."¹ The fruit of their deliberations was visible in due time. Two charters were granted—one to constitute the University of London, hitherto so called, "University College, London," for "the general advancement of literature and science, by affording to young men adequate opportunities of obtaining literary and scientific education at a moderate expense," the other charter creating the "University of London"²

Previous to the introduction of the measure giving power to the London University to grant degrees it was submitted to Melbourne for approval. A memorandum on the subject is preserved in his own writing:—

"It seems to me well conceived, but I would omit the words which I have underlined in the preamble and in the first enacting clause. There is no need to point so precisely to its being a measure for the benefit of the Dissenters. All persons will be entitled to take advantage of it under the words as they will stand after the omission."

Of many topics of administrative interest, few were more celebrated in their day than the special mission sent to negotiate better terms of commercial intercourse with France, in the success of which he had little faith.

"MY DEAR RICE,— The renewal of Bowring's mission has never been mentioned to me, and I entertain the strongest objection to it. In the first place I do not believe that it is in the least degree calculated to effect its object, but in addition to this I conceive it to be wrong in principle. How should we like a French political economist sent among us to preach in our commercial and manufacturing towns, that our Corn Laws were erroneous, and ought to be repealed. I know the whole proceeding to have given the greatest offence and uneasiness to the Government of France, and especially to the King; and I should be very sorry to see it revived under my administration."³

"Yours faithfully,

"MELBOURNE."

A new specimen of H. B's rare aptitude in turning to account his skill as an animal painter, in illustrating the passing events of the day, was that in which he chose for his subject the popular feat performed in the menagerie at Exeter Change, which every schoolboy home for the holidays saw with delight, and every nervous old gentleman witnessed with a shudder. The drawing depicted a lion in fine condition, with whose massive features those of O'Connell were subtly interlimned, good-naturedly suffering Lord John to put his head into his mouth as Van Amburg was wont to do. When half way in, the

¹ Private and confidential circular, September 8th, 1835. ² November 28th, 1836.

³ From Panshanger, September 20th, 1835, MS.

keeper, whose position disabled him from seeing what was going on, was supposed to ask: "Does he wag his tail?"¹ It was simply impossible for any one in England in October 1835 to see the caricature and forget it; and in this way it may be truly said, that the pencil of H. B. exercised over the minds of men a power thoroughly self-constituted and more absolutely irresponsible than the sceptre of any despot.

Melbourne's time was divided during the autumn between Downing Street and Panshanger, which was to him a second home, and in every respect a more cheerful one than Brocket, encompassed as it was with painful recollections. To the brightest sunshine there he would indeed frequently exclaim:

"Thou bringest the light of pleasures fled,
And hopes long dead."

But from sad memories he turned to official occupations, and seldom allowed more than a day or two to pass without a visit to town, then he would return to Hertfordshire with his carriage full of red boxes of papers, and spend the mornings in his own room, busy with his correspondence. But his diversified claims were not to be kept down, and towards the end of October he began to wish that Spring Rice were back again, to talk him out of misgivings, and clear up financial puzzles, and take, as he was ever ready to do, any amount of work off his hands. In an anxious, but kindly mood he wrote:—

"It is rather hard upon you who stayed so much longer in town than the rest, that there is so much to do and think of, that I wish you could be back on the 12th of November, or as near it as possible. The Church Commission is to meet, I think, on the 14th, and it will be necessary to make an effort to bring that business to a conclusion, and have the result prepared by the meeting of Parliament.—Adieu."²

His air of indifference and idleness created a general impression that his habit of official life was to take things easy, caring little and knowing less of the reasons that swayed the disposal of patronage. Nothing could be more unlike the truth; from the gift of a mitre or a garter to the promotion of a secretary or embassy, or the choice among candidates for legal appointments in Ireland, he took pains to scan the motives of each recommendation and to weigh the reasons by which each preference ought to be decided. He was of course sometimes mistaken, and sometimes deceived; but he certainly fell into few errors of selection from want of care. Here are a few instances just as they come in the correspondence of a single week:—

"I have a great regard for Lord H., and consider him to have supported us very steadily and handsomely. When I wrote to him I did not know how Palmerston felt inclined towards his son, and therefore answered in the general terms, which you have seen. I

¹ No. 413, October 7th, 1835.

² From Downing Street, October 28th, 1835, MS.

found Palmerston not very favourably disposed, and to say the truth, his matrimonial alliance which is an insuperable objection at Paris, would not be very convenient in any other place. It might not be injurious in reality, although that is doubtful, but the impression would be very bad. I think you had better write exactly as you propose. Lord H. is certainly very sore and much annoyed at present; but I think upon reflection he must admit the fairness of the reasoning. Do not mention what I said to you about Lansdowne, as he is anxious that his claim should be postponed for the present. Our Scotch friends are desirous that it should be given to the Duke of Hamilton; in order to take the chance of securing his influence, and it appears to me that it would be the best course."¹

"I forgot before you left London to speak to you upon the subject of the Second Remembrancer of the Irish Court of Exchequer which I had intended to do. I find considerable objection made to Mr. Howley. They state that he is not acquainted with equity, that he is not a man of much ability, and that his appointment, upon the whole, would not be creditable to the Government or satisfactory to the public. The list of candidates which has been given in by the Attorney-General at the request of the Lord Lieutenant, with what appears to me to be very fair comments upon each name, is as follows,—I presume that the order in which they are placed shows his preference: D. R. Pigott, C. Tickle, J. Moody, S. Hanna, H. Stock, W. E. Hudson, P. Fogarty, J. Howley. Of these, three, viz., Pigott, Fogarty and Howley, are Roman Catholics, the rest Protestants. Mr. Pigott, is, I understand, a personal friend of Mr. O'Connell's, and though this consideration should not be suffered to overbalance real claims, it appears to me to be an objection at the present moment, and perhaps there is something in the Chief Remembrancer being also a Roman Catholic, although I should be desirous if possible of avoiding to introduce the established course of alternate appointments, which I see fast approaching, and which perhaps is inevitable. Of the rest Mr. Tickle seems well qualified, by standing at the Bar and professional eminence, but his political opinions do not appear to be quite ascertained. Mr. Moody and Mr. Hudson are well spoken of generally, but they are common lawyers. Mr. Hanna and Mr. Stock are said to be good general lawyers, fit for any situation in their profession, and of unpretendingly liberal principles. You can consider this subject with some inquiry in Dublin; talk with Mulgrave, and let me know what you think upon the subject. I have written this morning to Mulgrave upon the question of the course to be pursued in the collection of tithe, and have advised him to consult fully with you upon it as you pass through Dublin. I agree entirely with what you said in our last conversation, as to the general principle upon which we must act. I foresee difficulties which may arise, but these must be dealt with as they arise according to circumstances. He has sent me the proposed draft

¹ Panshanger, October 3rd, 1835, MS.

of a letter in answer to applications for office, to which draft in its present form I feel considerable objection. It goes too much into detail and gives too many reasons. He will show you my letter and the shorter form which I have suggested."¹

O'Loghlen behaved well in thus placing Pigott's name at the head of the list; for, in the year before, his acceptance of the Solicitor-Generalship under Blackburn was condemned by many independent Liberals, and he was under the belief that certain letters in the *Evening Post*, of remonstrance if not of rebuke, were from Pigott's pen. Be that as it may, Pigott declined, wisely, as it proved, for his ultimate professional distinction, the offer of the Second Remembrancership; and after some further consultation it was conferred at the recommendation of the Chancellor, on Mr. Acheson Lyle, with the approval of the Bar and the entire satisfaction of suitors in the Exchequer.

The glare of prosperity dazzled most eyes; and in 1835, though the budget remitted taxation on a few minor articles of consumption only, it was received with general satisfaction, as indicating frugality in expenditure, and readiness to apply any available surplus in just relief from taxation. Next to Sir R. Peel, the highest financial authority in Opposition was Lord Ashburton, who wrote:—

"With the exception of the question of a sinking fund and of the most profitable mode of employing it, I find nothing to which the most critical fault-finder could object. I am convinced that the three kingdoms are at this moment in a condition fully to justify the assumption of the nickname given to one of your predecessors, Lord Ripon, and further that the prosperity has every appearance of being sound and lasting, so long at least as peace abroad and quiet and confidence at home can be maintained. It will not be easy to resist, under these circumstances, the attacks of those who seek easy and dishonest popularity by attacking your surplus or finding one for you. To trust the highest year as the average one, is an obvious abandonment of common prudence, and I really believe the safest course would be to build handsome Houses of Parliament, improve the navigation of the channel, and indulge a little in magnificence instead of yielding to the romance of the tax on knowledge or help to the squires. It is true that these poor squires and their tenants are an awful exception to the state of prosperity I am speaking of; but who can point out any reasonable chance of remedy from any measure discussed at the agricultural dinners? They are entitled to relief if the power of giving it can be proved, but the subject must be treated and disposed of by common sense. The poor law is approved by intelligent farmers. If I were to name the most desirable object of relief from an overflowing treasury, it would be in the article of postage. This tax presses heavily on the industry of the country, and checks that which is most essential to its life—all communication. I received the other day a

¹ October 5th, 1835.

letter from America of no remarkable bulk, charged with a postage of thirteen shillings. As such an event does not now often happen to me, the charge was of little consequence, but it made me reflect, how much useful industry and profitable business must be checked by such a charge. Free intercourse and correspondence begets business, and you might perhaps with less injury tax words spoken on the Royal Exchange than words interchanged by letter with all parts of the world. The relief would be to all classes of the educated community. I wish your Radical philosophers would be content to consider this tax as one upon knowledge, which it truly is, as well as upon industry. A reduction of postage one-half would be to my mind the most rational and substantial relief that could be given ; and further, it is clear that the Post Office revenue would spring under the change.¹

The Melbourne Government acted in the spirit of this wise prompting as soon as they were able ; and Sir Robert Peel's other political friends denounced them as reckless, improvident, and time-serving. What is the verdict of experience on cheapened postage ?

CHAPTER XXVI.

ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES.

Pepys made Chancellor—Resentment of Brougham—Supporters in the Peers—Bishop Longley—Dr. Arnold—Norton v. Melbourne—Reply to Lyndhurst.

POSSESSED at last of real power, Melbourne resolved steadfastly to try how far it was possible to allay discontent, and to retrieve the consequences of long misrule in Ireland, by a policy of equal justice. Remedial legislation might, nay must be, tardy. With a distrustful Court, an outnumbering majority in the Peers, and an Opposition in the Commons formidable in numerical strength and conspicuous ability, it would not be easy to carry any great measure of change, and impossible to carry many of importance. But while the experiment was making, and its issue was still doubtful, the great majority of the community might be made to feel the benefit and protection of equal laws. He would take the poison out of the cup, the poison of partiality, inveterate, intolerable, ineffable, that perverted and corrupted the nation's soul. Not now for the first time, as the glib tongue of his assailants averred, was he impressed with the conviction that the executive system, which had grown up under the sad necessities of garrison rule, and which still survived in pernicious vigour its statutory abolition, was one under which no intelligent enfranchised and newspaper-reading community could be expected to be content and

† From The Grange, November 10th, 1835, MS.

loyal. His letters from Ireland, when Chief Secretary, were full of earnest solicitude on this head. After all that had been done in the way of amelioration by Wellesley and Plunket, he urged vehemently the need of more comprehensive and systematic means of purifying the administration of justice :—

“What is to be done about the sheriffs? The non-execution of the process of the law, is the one great evil of the country. How can the lower orders be expected to observe the law, when the higher set the example both of resisting and corrupting it?”¹

The new Under-Secretary had not been many weeks in office before the inefficient state of the police, on whom, in ordinary circumstances, the preservation of order depended, caused him anxiety and concern. He found the condition of the Dublin constabulary “most wretched.” “It consisted of a small number of day police, having an establishment of peace officers somewhat similar to the old establishment of the metropolitan police officers, and a considerable number of watchmen—decrepit, worn-out old men. For the purpose of a day police these were absolutely insufficient; in fact, it was impossible to produce them. In August 1835, there was a public meeting in the Coburg Gardens, and it became his duty to consult with Alderman Darley (the senior magistrate) as to the means of preserving the peace. The small body of day police, he said, were totally inadequate to the occasion. The Under-Secretary suggested that he should bring out his watchmen. He said, “Oh, that will not do; they will excite so much the ridicule of the people that there would be a risk of their very appearance creating a disturbance. It will not do to show them in daylight.”² A bill organising a police force for the Irish metropolis was forthwith prepared, and in the Commons met with no obstruction; but to the Peers it savoured of rash innovation, and the scandal was consequently not removed till two years later.

Another novelty introduced by the new Executive, unwisely, in the opinion of many of the subordinates whom they found in office, and quixotically, in the judgment of not a few politicians of the old school, was the systematic prevention of the faction fights, which had long been the reproach of several parts of the country. Though liable to be turned by accident or design to political or sectarian account, these strange combats of the peasantry among themselves had seldom any specific cause intelligible out of the locality they disturbed. They were not mere ebullitions of anger at casual offence, or a sudden resentment against some fancied wrong, but engagements fought with a fluctuating fortune of warfare, waged from sire to son, between tribes, or clans, whose individual members bore no malice to their neighbours in the intervals of truce, frequently of prolonged duration. It was a fixed idea in the heads of many of the gentry, that the practice, however unmeaning and uncivilized, answered a good purpose, by letting out a good deal of hot blood in a way that did no

¹ Letter from W. Lamb, November 18th, 1827, MS.

² Evidence of Mr. Drummond before the Lords' Committee, 1839.

harm to property or the state. This was not merely an after-dinner sentiment, uttered with a laugh, or accompanied with a shrug. When the constabulary had notice that the Black-hens were about to attack the Magpies on the morrow, they "remembered to forget" to occupy the ground; and when the Three-year-olds were marshalling in strength against the Four-year-olds, the preservers of the peace were usually out of the way, not from any remissness on the part of the men, but in obedience to commands from their officers. Sir John Harvey, a provincial inspector of experience and repute, seriously remonstrated with Mr. Drummond when ordered to interpose a sufficient force to prevent these sanguinary encounters. He said it had never been done in his time, and that it would probably lead to very mischievous results if the combative dispositions of the most active and able-bodied of the peasantry were diverted from assailing one another's heads to those of the better orders of society. A quiet but firm reiteration of the resolve came to by Government terminated the anarchic policy dignified with the misnomer of prudent non-intervention. At first the belligerents refused to believe that interference with their time-honoured freedom of fight could be seriously intended. Fierce altercations arose, and occasionally a *fracas* took place with the police; but the Government were in earnest, the people soon came to understand that they were, and faction fights are now as rare in Ireland, as cock fights are in England.

The Garter, vacant by Lord Chatham's death, was offered to Lansdowne, but declined by him from a wish that it might be disposed of in some other way more likely to serve the interest of the Administration. The Premier warmly acknowledged the considerate unselfishness of his colleague, and in accordance with his advice, and that of Lord Rosebery, conferred it on the Duke of Hamilton.¹

Before the reassembling of the Cabinet in November, its chief conferred, by letter, with the Lord President and the Home Secretary upon the weightier topics that must engage its attention :—

"Many thanks for your letter. I am afraid that, for the reasons which you state, the question of the Irish Church can neither be avoided nor postponed. It must, therefore, be attempted to be solved. I have had from John a short summary of his views, but I cannot say that I thoroughly comprehend them. I am glad to hear the account which you give of the state of the country. It concurs with every other which I receive. The improvement of Ireland is reported to be manifest in everything : the breed of cattle, the greater comfort of the cabins, the clothing and general condition of the people. I am going to Lichfield's on Saturday to shoot for five or six days; but mean to be back to dine with the Lord Mayor on the 9th of November. If you could come too, it would be as well; but I suppose you will not, at any rate, be later than the 12th. I am rather sorry you did not mention about the Duke of Hamilton. I said nothing very explicit

¹ Letter from Panshanger, October 3rd, 1835, MS.

to him. His letter expressed the strongest feelings of satisfaction, and in my reply I expressed my pleasure at finding it was so agreeable to his feelings to receive the honour at our hands. The Duke of Cleveland, from a letter which he wrote me, will be offended, but as he has no earthly right to be so, it is not to be regarded. I have no doubt that this matter is at the bottom of the Duke of Somerset's conduct. The Duke of Montrose is not expected to live long, or rather is daily expected to die. You cannot think how strongly I was pressed for Scotland, that the Riband should be given, as it has been, and of what importance it was represented to be to our interest in that country."¹

Some weeks later he again pressed it on his friend, the opportunity arising upon the death of the Duke of Beaufort :—

"I write, because if I called there might be a chance of my missing you, to say that in my opinion, and after some consideration, it will be most advantageous for the Government that you should now accept the Blue Riband. It will be highly acceptable to the King; I know it will be a proof of his good will, and being expected, it will give as little offence as can possibly be given to other claimants. If this accords with your own opinion, and your own feeling, the sooner the King's pleasure is taken the better."²

The Sovereign's assent was cordial :—

"The King acknowledges the receipt of Viscount Melbourne's letter of yesterday, and after all that has passed on the subject of the disposal of vacant Blue Ribands, it is almost unnecessary that his Majesty should assure him that he highly approves of his recommendation of the Marquis of Lansdowne for that which has become so by the death of the Duke of Beaufort.

"The King said nothing to me on the subject at Brighton, but John Russell says that he thought his Majesty, in speaking to him, felt a little hurt at your not being there. We must have a report about the 23rd of this month, and, though it is an inconvenient time of the year, it would perhaps be as well if you could contrive to be there. You will see that the Ecclesiastical Commission has adjourned until the 13th of January, which I hope will not be bringing you to London sooner than you intend. We have had a most important question, and which would brook no delay, to determine about Spain, but I have not time to explain it to you now."³

The first serious difficulty of the Government arose from the discontent of suitors and practitioners in the Court of Chancery. The Commissioners having each enough to occupy him in his own court, neglected of necessity that in which they were required to sit together. Arrears accumulated; cases in part heard lay over without any visible prospect of being decided; costs exceeded all example; and public

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, October 29th, 1835, from Downing Street, MS.

² Note from South Street, November 25th, 1835; MS.

³ From Downing Street, December 7th; 1835, MS.

irritation increased every day at the palpable denial of justice. A pamphlet by Sir Edward Sugden, entitled, "What has become of the Great Seal?" kindled discontent into flame. On all sides mutterings of complaint were heard; the demand grew importunate for a Chancellor. Brougham heard it afar off, and was glad: the want of him at length was felt. Manifestly he was indispensable. Without him the public business could not go on. An ungrateful monarch might still grumble at the mention of his name; but the nation at large were calling for a Lord Keeper: who but he? Melbourne, nevertheless, was resolved not to re-appoint him. Lord J. Russell and a majority of the Cabinet were for raising Pepys to the chief seat in Equity, and making Bickersteth Master of the Rolls; Lord Howick and other members of the Government were impressed with the notion that Bickersteth would prove a great debater, and that he was in fact the only match for Brougham, whose wrath when palpably thrown over, all anticipated. Hobhouse reported a scene which he had witnessed before the Privy Council, where Bickersteth had completely put down the rude interruptions of Brougham, and from this example he contended great things were to be inferred. Curiously enough the King evinced likewise a decided predilection for the philosophic Radical, from his having read a brief but logical reply of his, to one of the ex-Chancellor's flighty speeches at the London University.¹ Melbourne, on the other hand, thought him too fond of theoretic speculation for a supreme adviser in legislation; and objected that one wholly untried in public life could hardly be expected to hold his own with the rivals and antagonists he would have to cope with in the Lords. Bickersteth is said to have let fall a foolish observation upon some hint of this misgiving, declaring with an over-confident air that *he* did not consider Brougham a very formidable antagonist. "I do," was Melbourne's comment; and he thought less than ever of the Utilitarian's chances in the war of words. His prescient sagacity was justified sooner and more signally than he could have anticipated. He spent the Christmas holidays at Panshanger, whence he wrote confidentially to Spring Rice regarding the proposal to make Pepys Chancellor.

"I had the satisfaction to receive a letter from the Solicitor-General (Sir J. Rolfe) expressing his entire approbation of the equity arrangement, and his conviction that it will be most agreeable both to the Bar and to the suitors. The Attorney-General (Sir J. Campbell) I am sorry to say, takes it very ill, and I fear will not be reconciled to it. The King approves it highly."²

Melbourne still hesitated. His good nature shrank from irreparably wounding the self-esteem of one who had long been an intimate and a colleague, and of whom personally he had nothing to complain. Possibly too he was conscious that in some degree his determination to shut out Brougham from the Cabinet was influenced by the apprehension that once readmitted the indefatigable drawer of bills and

¹ Hobhouse's 'Recollections.'

² January 2nd, 1836.

maker of speeches would play the part of master, if he were not really so. A perpetual scrambling and jostling for ascendancy with any men was repugnant to Melbourne's nature ; but with a man like Brougham it would make life intolerable. The discussion was renewed from week to week, and the determination still deferred. On the 10th of January he wrote :—

“My difficulties and embarrassments about the Great Seal are considerable. At this you will not be surprised, and I will therefore proceed to state them. Pepys will accept the Great Seal, under the distinct understanding that the separation of the office is to be attempted, and that upon its being carried he is to be appointed permanent judge in equity. He does this, however, with reluctance, feeling the great risk which he runs, and would rather that the Commission should continue, that he should be made a Peer, and in his present capacity of First Commissioner of the Great Seal and Master of the Rolls should bring forward the measure for the reformation of the Equity Courts. The objections to this suggested mode of proceeding are, by all whom I have consulted, declared to be insuperable. Bickersteth is very willing to undertake the judicial duties of Master of the Rolls, but partly from sensitiveness, partly from principle, does not like to engage in Parliament. The House of Commons I understand him to decline altogether, and on the score of insufficient fortune he is very reluctant to be raised to the peerage. Campbell after much discussion of the subject, which, I must say, considering how deeply his interests are involved, and his feelings touched, he has carried on with great fairness and good temper, has this morning sent to me his final determination, which is that he cannot submit to be passed over and must resign, if our arrangement is carried into effect. You know the difficulties there would be in filling up Campbell's situation. Rolfe would suit it, if he could venture to vacate, and Wylde, a man certainly of great abilities, would be willing, I doubt not, to accept the office of Solicitor-General. Now does the certainty of Campbell's resignation with Bickersteth's indisposition to give Parliamentary assistance make such a difference in the circumstances under which the Cabinet decided before as to make you think that that determination should be changed? My present intention is to call together those who are in town to-morrow and to take their opinion upon it ; I hope to receive yours as soon as possible. I have mentioned Pepys and Bickersteth to the King, who highly approves of them both, and would of course be disquieted with any change of intention.”¹

At last public discontent overbore ministerial indecision. It was urged that Pepys should be raised to the woolsack and that Bickersteth should be made a peer and Master of the Rolls. It was further resolved that a bill should be brought in to divide the political from the judicial functions of the Chancellor with the intention of conferring

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, January 10th, 1836, MS.

the former half of the office on Sir J. Campbell. Lord Langdale's first speech delivered in support of this measure was deemed so maladroit as to be fatal to its further progress. The sanguine hopes of his friends evaporated, and though he made an excellent judge he never attained to any eminence in debate. It was otherwise with his unpretentious rival. For some time he was content to get through his work methodically, never saying much, and generally looking rather hot and uncomfortable when called to account for what he was doing, but usually able to show that he was in the right. Pepys became an eminent judge, and after a time an invaluable addition to the strength of the Administration. In looks and habits, as in intellectual gifts, he was a strange contrast to his volatile and versatile predecessor. Holland said they had exchanged the rarest bundle of rockets in the world, for a mortar that went off seldom but never missed fire. Plunket asked the Premier how he got on with the new Chancellor: "Oh! capitally; I'm like a man who has broken for good with a terriugant mistress, and married the best of cooks."

Brougham was beside himself with rage. To the last he had clung to hopes of restoration to his former dignity and dreams of more than former power. Now that these were suddenly dissipated he said he had been deceived. His vanity would not allow him to admit that all the high anticipations of glory to come, in which he had boastfully indulged, were without foundation. Few clever men have the courage to confess their being duped; fewer still that they have been self-befooled. And Brougham's vanity was not only that of encyclopædic knowledge and of omnipotence in exposition, but of being the keenest and shrewdest man of the world. There was nothing for it therefore but to fasten the shame of the deception round another's neck. On the memorable night when Melbourne had come to him to tell him he was first minister, and to say how much he regretted that he could not tell him who was to be Chancellor, his indignation was sacrificed to friendship and his self-love to zeal for his party. He had listened to plausible and pleasant words of deprecation, implying, as he took them, the acknowledgment of his paramount importance and unique position among public men. We shall never know what really passed at that curious interview; how far Melbourne may have been tempted by old feelings of kindness, or by new instincts of prudence, to play with words or temporise with the emotions not far removed in that first frenzy of chagrin, from lunacy: nor shall we ever know what questions and cross-questions were put and parried, or frankly met, and in what terms. The correspondence which subsequently took place upon the occurrence of the final breach doubtless contained all arrayed in the most florid garb of reproach and recrimination. But when a decade had gone by, and the pulse of ambition had grown cold, Melbourne directed that Brougham's letters should be restored to him, and he consented ultimately to both his and Melbourne's being committed to the flames. The collector of gossip will of course regret the loss; but those who honour genius will rejoice to find an instance, not

too common, of such mutuality of renunciation and disposition to forget injuries. For it cannot be doubted that in their open quarrel each said of the other hard things, which, for the fame of both and the good of the country they served, it is better should not be chronicled in the history of their time. Be this as it may we know that when the tidings came to the official exile in Westmoreland that the inarticulate equity draftsman whom he had made Solicitor-General, and then Master of the Rolls, was in his stead to occupy the woolsack, Brougham was completely stunned. Then came the revulsion of energy and anger almost irrestrainable. His reappearance in the House of Lords was gaped for by all who feared or hoped for mischief ; but he did not reappear. Tantalising letters wondering at his absence, and provoking articles dwelling with real or affected concern, on his premature extinction wound him up at last to such a pitch of excitement that his intimate friends grew uneasy, and not without difficulty, frightened him by hints about his health to prolong his stay at home. Campbell, after all, did not resign, being mollified with a peerage conferred upon his wife ; and for five years more he continued to fill the situation of Attorney-General. Brougham diligently laboured to convince him that he had been as ill-used as himself : for, as he always said, " Whigs were deceivers ever." But Sir John was steadfast, and would not be beguiled.

Mr. Spencer Perceval, who believed in the revelation of the Unknown Tongues, undertook a mission to the leading members of the Government, who it was thought desirable to rouse from their undiscernment of the signs of the times. Other ministers received him in wondering silence and courteously bowed him out. At South Street he met with a different reception. Always curious about religious belief, whatever shape it assumed, Melbourne plunged at once into discussion with the Apostle, wanted to know his credentials, and how he could venture to deliver a message from heaven the language of which he did not understand. For himself he would be only too glad if some one would show him the clear and true light, for he had a very poor opinion of the illuminating power of the tapers then most in vogue. His monitor did not heed the half casuistic drift of his observations ; and getting tired of a controversy which came to nothing, he brought it to an end by saying gravely, " Your proper course, I think, will be to go to the bishops." The Apostle told him in confidence that this duty had already been provided for, and that Henry Drummond was, he believed, gone that very day to Lambeth. What came of his wrestling with Archbishop Howley, Melbourne never could learn ; but he delighted to tell how a well-known clergyman met Mr. Drummond at Nice, who told him he was much favoured there by communications from the spirits. Underneath a house overlooking the sea there were real or artificial caverns, and in front of these when he walked after dark, he used to hear distinctly voices that could not be mistaken. When asked what did they say ? he replied that the supernatural language could not be rendered in the

vulgar tongue ; but, that the cadences were most impressive, a sweet low whirr, and then a moaning sound, as of lamentation. His orthodox acquaintance asked if he was certain that bats never frequented these caves ; a suggestion which he put aside firmly, yet with a certain tone of pity for the reverend unbeliever.

As the session approached, the First Minister began to take counsel regarding the Royal Speech.

"Minto has just sent me your note. The meeting of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners has been postponed until the 20th. I know nothing of this except by circular. I suppose the reason is that they have not been able to prepare the Reports. I do not think that it would be prudent to postpone upon this account the meeting of the Cabinet. We have much to digest and decide, and I should wish the Speech to have a very mature consideration. I would not, therefore, have Minto put off his dinner, and I hope you will be able, if not to be at it, at least to come soon after it."¹

In preparing the Speech from the Throne he was unwilling to put too high the estimate of national prosperity. The revenue had exceeded expectation, and commerce was more than usually active ; but its condition was in some respects exceptional ; and in many agricultural districts prices and wages continued to be very low :

"I send you a rough sketch of what it may be proper to say upon the estimates. The increase of the local rates and the state of the land are ticklish points. I do not like to say much more than I have respecting prosperity. There are temporary circumstances which increase it in the present year. The Tea trade is one, the Loan another. Depend upon it, whatever the economists may say, the borrowing a large sum of money, and paying it off again, even slowly and in a disadvantageous manner, has a tendency to give a temporary appearance of increased revenues, etc., etc."²

Parliament met on the 4th of February : Lord Stanley taking his seat for the first time on the front Opposition bench, nearer the Speaker's chair than Sir Robert Peel ; and to the regret of his old friends, with whom of late he had been intimate as formerly, making a speech severing himself more than ever from them. On the amendment to the Address they prevailed by 41,—more by ten than they had expected. This success was followed by a majority of 64 on the second reading of the Irish Corporations Bill, the Conservatives numbering but 240 votes. Public opinion seemed to ratify this decision, and it is inexplicable why it should not have been acquiesced in as a matter of policy by the chiefs of Opposition. Democratic agitation was falling asleep ; the "No Popery" cry was growing hoarse and dull, and no threatenings of foreign trouble overhung the general prosperity. In the Peers the adherents of ministers mustered strong. Lord Derby took his usual seat behind them. Brougham's

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, January 7th, 1836, MS.

² To the Chancellor of the Exchequer, January 22nd, 1836.

place was vacant. Lord Cottenham took the oaths as a Peer and his seat on the woolsack. The Duke of Richmond was among the occupants of the cross benches. Lord Grey did not attend; neither did Lord Spencer. Though greatly outnumbered, the Whig party in the Upper House represented more green acres and more old blood than their opponents, many of whose patents of nobility dated from the two previous reigns. Melbourne's philosophy did not forbid his enjoyment of this reflection. Himself one of "the New Men," it filled him, he owned, with no little satisfaction to be the accepted leader of Norfolk, Argyll, Devonshire, Grafton, Bedford, Sutherland, Leinster, Shrewsbury, Breadalbane, Fingal, Fitzwilliam, Essex, Grosvenor, Carlisle, Clanricarde, Spencer, Townshend, Kenmare, Morley, Meath, Scarborough, Fife, Huntingdon, Radnor, Yarborough, Stourton, Arundel, Dacre, Darnley, Fortescue, Ducie, Saye and Sele, Anglesea, Vaux, the patents of whose ennoblement were as time-stones along the highway of power, from the Conquest to the Revolution.

In the Commons Government had just gained likewise an adherent whose moral worth was greater even than his distinguished rank—the ex-Governor General of India. Some found fault with Lord W. Bentinck's address to the electors of Glasgow, in which he promised to vote for household suffrage and the ballot. "He was the first man of high rank and station who had publicly professed ultra-Radical opinions." His angry relative goes on to tell how his success in life had been greater than his deserts, as he was "not right-headed," and had committed some great blunder or other in every public situation in which he was placed; but he was simple in his habits, popular in his manners, liberal in his opinions, and magnificently hospitable in his mode of life. These qualities were enough to ensure popularity.¹ By way of set-off against this, he adds Macaulay's well-known inscription for the column erected at Calcutta to commemorate Lord Williams' Government of India, for which though designated by Mr. Canning, he was eventually appointed by the Duke of Wellington. A week later Greville notes with satisfaction Poulett Thomson's abuse of the Address at Glasgow, which he termed "truckling and disgraceful"; and then, by way of balancing the account of blame, he calls the President of the Board of Trade the greatest of coxcombs, who seriously pretended that he had originally taken office to oblige the Government, and that Lord Althorp refused to go on without him.²

Early in the session Mr. Hume, as chairman of the committee on Orange Lodges, moved an address to the Crown, founded on its report against officers in the Army or Navy being permitted to belong to a confederacy which, it was thought, might be perverted to dangerous objects. Lord J. Russell won the assent of the House by his statesman-like manner of dealing with a very difficult subject. Lord Stanley forgot their recent feud in generous praise of his old colleague,

¹ Greville's Journal, vol. iii. p. 339.

² Ibid. p. 330.

and Sir Robert Peel advised the Orangemen to bow to the will of Parliament and dissolve their organisation. But the blow came from the Whigs, and was not soon forgiven in Ulster.

Sir Henry Parnell, though he had not kept his seat for Queen's County, had been included in the Administration. Old ties of friendship and confidence bound many of its leading members to him ; and when he asked that Dr. Longley, the Master of Harrow, who was his relative by marriage, should receive some appropriate recognition of his eminent services and attainments, Melbourne expressing "the high opinion which, from general report as well as from the testimony of those whose judgment he respected, he had formed of his character, literary acquirements, and general qualifications, told the Paymaster-General that he would seize the earliest opportunity of acting upon the opinion he had conceived." The contemplated translation of the Bishop of Hereford presented a fitting opportunity, he thought, of "proving the sincerity of these professions as well as his friendship for Sir Henry by the offer of that See."¹ While gratefully accepting the offer, Dr. Longley felt it his duty to apprise the minister that, "though anxious to promote church reform, and longing to see the Church cleared of those imperfections under which he lamented to see her labouring, there were some questions connected with the Irish Church on which he should be unable to support the Government in the House of Lords ; and should this circumstance prove an insuperable obstacle to his appointment, however much he might regret the issue, it would not in the least degree diminish his feelings of gratitude and respect."² Melbourne at once replied that he respected very much the spirit of candour which animated him. He had made the offer under the belief derived from general impression as well as from the assurances of his relative, that the Doctor's opinions "were of a liberal character, particularly with respect to the reformation of the Church, and that he was, upon the whole, disposed to support the existing Government. This was all that could be required of any man. It never could be his intention to tie down opinion upon particular measures, and, therefore, the intimation regarding the bill respecting the Irish Church would make no difference in his determination."³ Difficulties arose from the reluctance of the Bishop of Hereford to be transferred to Chichester, and in June the new See of Ripon was conferred on the Master of Harrow.

A strong desire existed among the friends whose judgment of character had most weight with him, that Dr. Arnold should be placed on the episcopal Bench. He was the personal friend of the Lord President, Archbishop Whately, Mr. Senior, Mr. Justice Coleridge, and many others. His services to education were pre-eminent, and it was truly said that no man's promotion would have given so much pleasure to the best of the young men then coming into life. Learned, elo-

¹ Dr. Longley's Correspondence, MS., February 28th, 1836.

² Ibid, February 29th, 1836.

³ Ibid.

quent, tolerant, and fearless, he seemed to be in every way marked out as the fitting object of selection by a Liberal minister. Repeatedly the question was asked why he was not appointed; and no answer was publicly given that can be called satisfactory. Melbourne had read more than one of his theological writings, which he thought excellent; and individually he inclined to the opinions regarding church property in Ireland, for which the master of Rugby had been most called in question. Dr. Arnold advocated its proportional partition among the differing communions there, and Archbishop Whately was willing to undertake the justification of the measure in the Peers, if Government would give the pledge of their having adopted the principle which the gift of an English mitre to its most eloquent champion would imply. Melbourne and the majority of the Cabinet would have been only too glad to end the controversy between parties in the way proposed, and their hopelessness of inducing either House of Parliament to concur in the plan would not have prevented Melbourne from making Arnold a bishop. Other considerations, neither political nor sectarian, led him, however, to refuse, into which it is unnecessary to enter here. He was not given to affect squeamishness about offending the prejudices of the party opposed to him, and he knew that Lord Stanley did not hesitate to place his own son under Dr. Arnold's care; why then did he refuse to promote him? When asked by Eden, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, he replied, banteringly, "What have Tory Churchmen ever done for me that I should make them a present of such a handle against my government?" And there cannot be a doubt that he believed that to make Arnold a bishop would have cost the Administration very dear.

Dr. Hampden's appointment to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, excited some alarm among the clergy, by reason of his supposed leanings to latitudinarianism in matters of belief. The two Archbishops sought an interview with the Premier to expostulate. He assured them there was no intention of selecting one who was not deemed orthodox, and for his own part, having read several of the new Professor's writings, he had not discovered where he strayed from the tenets of the Church. The Prelates could not cite any passages in proof of their accusation, and the appointment having been actually made, he did not feel that he had any power to cancel it. Bishop Copleston and other orthodox divines had been previously consulted, and expressed no objection on theological grounds. But Dr. Hampden was a man cold and reserved in manner, and in politics a Whig.

In the beginning of April ministers were urged to impose some check on the continued outflow of gold from the Bank, from the fear of a panic suddenly supervening upon the great expansion of trade, and unprecedented extent of joint stock speculation. In reply to a communication of the utmost gravity from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the First Lord of the Treasury wrote:—

"The state of the circulating medium is a most delicate and difficult question. I have long shared in the apprehensions expressed in the letters which you have sent to me. I think it is hardly possible that the present rise of prices, and consequent prosperity is all sound, though there are some who contend that it is so. If the Bank holds its hand now, there will probably be considerable revulsion and ruin, though less than at a future period; but we shall have to bear the whole blame of being the authors of the national distress, and many will say that we have brought it about quite wantonly and unnecessarily. However, I think, upon the whole, the letter which you propose to write to the Governor is right, but I would rather that it stood "disposed to restrict the system of loans and advances" than as it does, "not disposed to continue," which seems to point to a sudden and general suspension of all accommodation. You will, of course, see the Governor, and consult with him on the exact line to be pursued. I do not feel myself sufficiently conversant with facts and details to give more than a general opinion, but this I know, that of all things, sudden and extensive results are to be avoided, and these are sure to be produced by great and hasty alterations of system. Loss and insolvency are nothing if spread over a sufficient period of time; on the contrary, general solvency is of little avail if there is an immediate and present stoppage.¹

The Budget of 1836 brought the Ministry no small *éclat*. After payment of large sums to the West India planters, there remained a net surplus of £662,000, wherewith the duties on tea and newspaper stamps were greatly lightened. Lord Althorp's *ad valorem* rates, which assumed three clearly distinguishable qualities of tea, and which it was contended, formed a graduated scale of taxation, though just in aim, had proved a failure. A uniform charge, though involving a temporary sacrifice, was now proposed as likely to yield eventually a larger revenue, and calculated to cheapen the coarser kinds of tea for the benefit of the humbler classes. The reduction of the tax on newspapers from 4*d.* to 1*d.* gave a new impulse, not only to the spread of political, but of industrial knowledge, and the interchange, in a degree wholly immeasurable, of social and of intellectual wants. The number of daily and weekly journals immediately rose from 397 to 458, and their total circulation was quadrupled. Recalling, as it is difficult to do fully and completely, the prejudices of the time, and the strength of the hindrances in the way of such a change, its proposal deserves to be regarded as one of the boldest and most beneficent which had yet been made to better the condition of the people. It was the first and heaviest blow dealt against illicit, immoral, and incendiary journalism, whose gains had depended on evading the excessive duty indiscriminately imposed on all daily and weekly publications. Other steps were necessary to complete the emancipation of the press from vexatious and frustrating control; but this,

¹ From Panshanger, April 8th, 1836, MS.

as it was the most difficult, was undoubtedly the greatest in that direction. Its praise, in a word, may be summed up in this, that it went a long way to convert one of the greatest luxuries of the opulent classes into an ordinary privilege for all ranks of the community.

The municipal corporations in Scotland and England having been reformed, it became necessary to extend the same policy to those of Ireland. Abuses whimsical in variety, and indefensible in enormity, had been exposed by the commission of inquiry issued by the Grey Cabinet. The vice of local jobbing was dyed there with a deeper tinge of sectarianism and partisanship than in the other portions of the realm. The scandal was not denied, but Sir R. Peel and his friends would only consent to break up the worn-out machinery of urban rule on condition that nothing similar to that reconstructed in Great Britain should be substituted in its place. This was to found in Ireland a system of local government on the basis of national disability and religious exclusion. The controversy became a crucial test of party; and for the ensuing four years the reconstruction of civic corporations, or their obliteration to make room for officials appointed by the Crown, was made the dividing line between Conservatives and Liberals. In moving the second reading of the Irish Bill, on the 18th of April, 1836, Melbourne cited the report of the Commissioners to show that these institutions were even more close and corrupt than in England. But he relied rather on their political and social faults, as a reason why they should be no longer tolerated:—

“He looked much more to the division and hostility, the enmity and animosity existing in the corporate towns of Ireland, than to any strong cases of abuse or malversation which had been adduced against particular bodies. Not only had these corporations excluded Roman Catholics, but Protestants whose opinions did not coincide with their own, and they not only introduced division between Protestants and Roman Catholics, but between Protestants themselves. It appeared to him that it was incumbent on the Legislature to make provision for admitting all classes of his Majesty’s subjects in Ireland, of whatever religion they might be, to their due share in the management and government of their towns.”

There was indeed no division on the second reading, but party feeling ran high, and the House of Lords, usually so calm and dignified, more than once became the scene of personal altercations and appeals to political and religious passion, as violent as in the highest fever of the struggle for Reform. The English Municipal Bill, though pertinaciously fought, had not upset the equanimity of the nobles, but when its counterpart for Ireland was in Committee, nearly the whole body of Opposition peers resolved on its mutilation, and upon Lyndhurst the task devolved of making out a case for this new measure of national outlawry. It is hard after forty years to realise the unreasoning and unreasonable fears of seditious borough rates, and popish water-pipes, which then bewildered experienced statesmen, and beguiled them into a contest wherein defeat was inevitable. For Lynd-

hurst's fame it was unfortunate that he should have undertaken to find apologies, if not arguments, in its defence ; but it would be unjust to measure these historically without recalling the weight and worth of those whose mouthpiece, on the occasion, he consented to become. For one memorable indiscretion of phrase he must, indeed, be held individually accountable. In an elaborate, and otherwise circumspect, statement of the objections to the creation of popularly elective corporations in the towns and cities of Ireland, he was betrayed by some unaccountable impulse into saying that the great bulk of those on whom they were asked to confer the civic franchise, "were aliens in blood, language, and religion." How one so wary and habitually given to weigh with care every term and epithet, should have treble-shotted such a gun as this, without taking account of the recoil, is simply incomprehensible. From his Whig opponents mild mutterings in protest came of course ; but in the Upper House they were too feeble, both in number and debating ability, to resist the opposition to their bill, and Lyndhurst's motion to leave out all the reconstructed portions of it, was carried by a large majority. When, thus mutilated, it was returned to the Commons, the exasperation caused by the memorable taunt found many eloquent voices. It had been, in the interval, the daily theme of bitter comment in the press, and its author, tardily convinced of its imprudence, had sought to attenuate its force by various explanatory observations. Something of the kind was likewise attempted on his behalf by friends in the Commons ; but it would not do. Lord John said he had heard the unlucky words *ipsis auribus*, and O'Connell took care they should not be forgotten. Instead of renewing agitation for Repeal, he endeavoured to stimulate democratic feeling on both sides of the Channel against the hereditary principle in legislation ; and how widely the belief had spread at the time that some organic change in that direction was at hand is illustrated by a letter from Macaulay to the friend with whom he had no reserve, and who, like himself, was wholly antipathetic to the Arch-Tribune :—

"There is, in my opinion, a question compared with which the Ballot and everything else sinks into insignificance, I mean the question of a hereditary peerage. I do not see how it is possible to avoid a final collision between the two Houses. The probability is that popular opinion will gather strength every year. In the meantime the Lords are becoming fiercer and more obstinate day by day. The young aristocrats who are destined to fill the seats of the present peers are even more bigoted than their fathers. The nobles and the people are not only at variance, but there is no tendency to approximation ; nay, the separation is daily becoming more marked. The crisis is at hand. I do not expect it in 1837. It may not arrive in 1838 or 1839. But come it must, and in this generation. The minds of men are fast becoming familiarized to the contemplation of changes, which, even when I left England, would have been regarded with dismay by a great majority of the middle classes. The institution of a hereditary

aristocracy is one which it is not easy to defend in theory. But it had, till lately, a very strong hold on the feelings and imagination of the people. It is losing that hold. Opinions on this subject which, a few years ago, few people entertained and scarcely any ventured openly to express, are now constantly repeated in the most respectable newspapers, and have been very plainly hinted in Parliament without calling forth any strong disapprobation. These opinions, I firmly believe, will spread and strengthen. In a few years it will be absolutely necessary to take some extraordinary course for the purpose of bringing the two branches of the Legislature into harmony with each other. What course will it then be proper to take? It seems to me that any creation of peers which did not almost double the numbers of the Upper House would be no remedy at all, and that a creation of three or four hundred hereditary peers, would, in the first place, be a bad remedy, and would in the next place be only a temporary remedy. There must surely be something radically bad in the constitution of a legislative body, which for the preservation of the state, must from time to time be swamped by the executive body. As one of them I should prefer a reform which went direct to the seat of the evil. Were I one of the peers, I would far rather renounce my privileges and live as a private citizen, with the chance of obtaining a seat in the House of Commons, than remain a member of an assembly so impotent and so ridiculous as the House of Lords would be, if several hundreds of Whigs were sent thither to out-vote the Conservatives. Such a measure would give satisfaction to nobody. It could not possibly be final. It would destroy any reverence for the Upper House which might still linger in the public mind, and would infallibly lead to the complete abolition of that body.”¹

A more signal example cannot be found in all his writings, of Macaulay's habit of thinking rhetorically on the gravest and most difficult question, even when speaking or writing in the calm of confidence. Lansdowne was disappointed, Melbourne merely amused at his unpractical estimate of public feelings and tendencies; and at his dogmatic forecast of changes to come, with which he imagined the time was not only big, but ready to be delivered. Spring Rice assured him, in reply, that whatever contingencies he might fancy he recognised in dreams at Ootacamund as nigh at hand in England, politicians on the spot could not discern any sign of them. Few men of talent in 1836 rallied to O'Connell's trumpet call to sweep away the House of Lords; in a short time he betook himself to other instrumentation more effective in stirring the hearts of the many on either side of the Channel; and ere the end of the reign already drawing to a close, peerage reform was heard of only in the cracked utterances of *Peter Tomkins*, supposed to be Brougham in disguise. “All seemed quieter in the political world than for a long time past.”²

Melbourne spent the Easter holidays in Hertfordshire, where he

¹ To Spring Rice, MS.

² Greville's Diary, May 2nd, 1836.

heard of a recurrence of domestic disagreements at Storey's Gate, which on more than one occasion previously had excited his regret and concern. His counsel had never been proffered on such occasions, but, when sought, it had been uniformly given in favour of forbearance and peace. In public as in private life he was always for "keeping people if possible from getting wrong with the world." The world he knew has no justice or lenity for domestic jars, no conscience and no pity for the aggrieved. Mr. Norton had in many respects forfeited his official respect, and incurred his personal disesteem. With Colonel Leicester Stanhope, Sir James Graham, and other intimate friends, he had been confidentially consulted as to the means of preventing further contention and the repetition of what they all concurred in reprobating on Mr. Norton's part, as unpardonable and unworthy treatment. Still, he was averse from resort to any step which would bar the way to reconciliation, or give publicity to the rending of household ties. And all his communications, verbal and written, were to the same effect :—

"I have just received your letter, with Leicester Stanhope's enclosed, with which I am much pleased. He could not have acted better, nor with more discretion. Never, to be sure, was there such conduct ! To set on foot that sort of inquiry without the slightest real ground for it ! But it does not surprise me. I have always known that there was there a mixture of folly and violence which might lead to any absurdity or any injustice. You know so well my opinion, that it is unnecessary for me to repeat it. I have always told you that a woman should never part from her husband whilst she can remain with him. If this is generally the case, it is particularly so in such a case as yours : that is, in the case of a young, handsome woman, of lively imagination, fond of company and conversation, and whose celebrity and superiority have necessarily created many enemies. Depend upon it, if a reconciliation is feasible, there can be no doubt of the prudence of it. It is so evident that it is unnecessary to expatiate upon it. Lord Holland, who is almost the only person who has mentioned the subject to me, is entirely of that opinion."¹

Again he wrote :—

"If for the sake of your children you think you can endure to return to him, you certainly will act most wisely and prudently for yourself in doing so. I advise you, however, to take no step of yourself or without the advice of Seymour and Graham ; and if you determine upon writing to Mr. Barlow, send your letter open to them, giving them a discretionary power either to send or to withhold it. Keep up your spirits ; agitate yourself as little as possible ; do not be too anxious about rumours and the opinion of 'the world ;' being (as you are) innocent and in the right, you will in the end bring everything round."

Her brother-in-law, whom Melbourne used to call the proudest man

¹ From Panshanger to the Hon. Mrs. Norton, April 10th, 1836.

in England, except his father the Duke of Somerset, and her uncle Sir James Graham, were probably the best advisers she could have had : and had they doubted the certainty of her vindication, they would not have sustained a resolve to challenge her accuser to the proof.

On his return to town he learned with surprise that the injurious inquiries above referred to having ended in nothing, it had been suggested to their author that their direction might be profitably changed, and that he himself should be made the object of them. The political gains from such a course were obvious should litigation in any form ensue, and the pecuniary compensation were it hushed up through fear of exposure might well be set at a high amount. He had every inducement on public and private grounds to avert a controversy, so damaging and so distressing ; and it hardly need be said that if payment of the utmost damages laid at the suit of Mr. Norton could have been paid consistently with honour and prudence, it would have been well worth his while to enrich his adversary thereby. Compromise, however, was manifestly out of the question. He put himself at once in the professional hands of Sir John Campbell, who, with the assistance of Sergeant Talfourd and Mr. Thesiger, undertook the conduct of his defence ; and he then wrote to Mrs. Norton :—

“ I hope you will not take it ill if I implore you to try, at least, to be calm under these trials. You know that what is alleged (if it be alleged) is utterly false, and what is false can rarely be made to appear true. The steps which it will be prudent to take, it will be impossible to determine until we know more certainly the course that is intended to be pursued.”¹

But what he preached he was not himself able to practise. The subject became every day more and more the engrossing theme of conversation in society, and of comment in the press. Sensitive at all times to imputations by which others were likely to be affected through him, he could not be unconscious that the fortunes of his friends and adherents were inextricably involved in the issue that was depending. By the law as it then stood no personal testimony by him was admissible ; and it was vain to surmise what might be asserted regarding trivial or forgotten details of intimacy stretching over a period of more than five years. Vexation and anxiety at length completely overpowered him, and for some weeks he was seriously unwell. On the 9th of June he wrote :—

“ Since I first heard that I was to be proceeded against, I have suffered more intensely than I ever did in my life. I have had neither sleep nor appetite, and I attribute the whole of my illness (at least of the severity of it) to the uneasiness of my mind. Now what is this uneasiness for? Not for my own character, because, as you justly say, the imputation upon me is as nothing. It is not for the political consequences to myself, although I deeply feel the consequences which my indiscretion may bring upon those who are attached to me

¹ April 23rd, 1836.

and follow my fortunes. The real and principal object of my anxiety and solicitude is you, and the situation in which you have been so unjustly placed, by the circumstances which have taken place."

Meanwhile, lest it should be thought that he was sacrificing the public interest to his own, he told the King that he was ready to resign. His Majesty behaved with great consideration and kindness, deprecating his doing so in the strongest terms for such a cause and assuring him that he paid no regard to the pending accusation. On being made acquainted with the circumstance, the Duke of Wellington at once assured Melbourne that he saw no reason for his relinquishing office, and that if he were to do so, he for one would certainly not make one of any combination that might in consequence be formed. So matters continued till the 22nd of June, when the case of Norton *v.* Melbourne came on for trial before Chief Justice Tindal in the Court of Common Pleas, the damages being laid at £10,000. The first names called on the special jurors' panel were Sir Robert Peel and Mr. F. Baring, neither of whom answered. Of the twelve persons eventually sworn, several were known to hold Conservative opinions; others were believed to be of the opposite way of thinking; and about the rest nothing distinctly could be ascertained. Happily no differences arose among them; and it was likewise noticed that the counsel on both sides appeared to have been chosen without respect to party. Sir William Follett, who had recently filled the office of Solicitor-General, led for the plaintiff; and though he had not advised his going to trial, stated the case as if he reckoned on obtaining a verdict. The witnesses were chiefly discarded servants, nearly all of damaged character, who had been, for a considerable time before, kept out of the way at the country seat of Mr. Norton's brother, Lord Grantley, and none of whom professed to be able to swear to any circumstances within the three preceding years. At the close of the plaintiff's case, late in the day, the Attorney-General asked for an adjournment; but on an intimation from the jury, in which the judge also concurred, he waived the suggestion, and without calling witnesses proceeded to analyse the evidence that had been adduced. He branded the whole story as a tissue of fabrications which it was impossible men of discernment and impartiality could believe; and though his client was inadmissible as a witness he was authorised to state upon the honour of a peer that the charge was entirely false. The judge left the issue fairly to the jury, who without leaving the box, returned a verdict for the defendant. A loud cheer broke forth at the announcement, which was echoed by the crowd waiting without the court. At an audience next day, William IV. cordially congratulated the minister on having baffled the machinations which, he did not doubt, had had their origin in sinister aims fomented by the meaner animosities of party. His daughter, Lady Mary Fox, was the intimate friend of Mrs. Norton, and remained steadfast in her attachment throughout. Lord Wynford had been Mr. Norton's guardian, and current rumour ascribed to him an active

share in the attempt to overthrow the Government by impeaching the personal conduct of its chief. It was even said that a princely personage had not disdained to encourage the anonymous vilipending, by which it was evidently hoped to imbue the minds of society in general with an amount of prejudice that ordinary jurors would consciously or unconsciously be unable to disregard.

A few days afterwards the Duke of Cumberland, happening to meet Melbourne in the corridor of the House of Lords, said :—

“Have you seen Wynford? He wishes to speak to you; and it is in order to assure you, upon his honour, that he has had nothing to do with this affair, nor indeed any of us. We would do nothing so ungentlemanlike. The moment I heard he was charged with it, I went to him, and asked him, and he solemnly denied it.”

Melbourne replied that he never believed mere rumours, and of course his Royal Highness's declaration was perfectly satisfactory. On entering the house, Lord Wynford sent a messenger to say that he wished to speak to him, and that being lame he could not conveniently cross the floor. He repeated the disclaimer already made by the Duke, adding that he had never heard of the action until four days after it had been commenced, and that as for that unfortunate young man, as he termed his ward, he had not seen him for two or three years.

Having successfully opposed or mutilated nearly all the ministerial measures, Lyndhurst resolved upon a review of the session :—

“He had been accused unreasonably, he said, with being critical; and untruly of being ambitious. Under two sovereigns he had had the custody of that ‘splendid bauble,’ as the greater revolutionist of former times had called the Mace. His aspirings had been fully satisfied, and he was now influenced only by a sense of duty. But contrasting ministerial promises with the legislative fruits of the year, he could not help thinking that the noble Viscount had proved his incapacity to guide the counsels of the Crown. The result had been as disproportioned in execution to the expectations which were held out, as the lofty position of the noble Lord at that period, with his humbled condition at that moment. As was said of one of his predecessors in office, “his promises were as he then was, mighty; his performances as he now is, nothing.” The bill of the Chancellor to reform the Court of Equity fell still-born—*requiescat in pace*. He would not disturb its ashes. The Ecclesiastical Courts Bill was brought in, but likewise was allowed to slumber. A Stanneries Bill had indeed been passed; but it would ever bear the reproach of being the first infraction of a rule theretofore deemed fundamental in the constitution that the judges who sat in our courts should be irremovable save for proved or admitted delinquency. Ministers had proposed that as Irish Corporations had been exclusively in the hands of Protestants, they should henceforth be exclusively in the hands of Catholics, and the Opposition proposed to do away with them altogether. The Stamp duties on Newspapers Bill, was one of doubtful

and hazardous character. They were ready to pass the Tithe Bill without an abstract principle for the purpose of plundering the Church of Ireland ; but as this condition was insisted on, the measure was rejected. The Charitable Trusts Bill was indeed rejected, on account of the vicious principle that Dissenters should be eligible as trustees of old foundations. Nothing could be more inconsistent with a due desire to maintain the interests of the Established Church, than that school endowments should be administered by that class of persons. Ministers had abandoned the Church Pluralities Bill, and the Regulation of Fees Bill, at the dictation of certain parties. They abandoned their own Registration Bill to please the same section of their supporters—"Was there ever such a Government?" Was the decay and wretchedness so visible upon one side of Downing Street relieved by the brilliant glare of the other? Was the foreign policy one to make other nations court their alliance ; to view them with friendship and regard, or, with aversion and loathing?"

After alluding to the failure of the auxiliary legion in Spain defacing the records of Wellington's greatest triumphs, he continued :—

"The noble Viscount stood erect among all his disasters, reverses, and perils. He appeared unmoved. His language was always lofty, swelling in proportion as the pediment on which he stood was reeling and staggering. In former times amid such disasters there would be only one course for a minister to pursue. These, however, were antiquated notions. A fastidious delicacy formed no part of the character of the noble Viscount. He told them that, notwithstanding the insubordinate temper of his crew, he would stick to the vessel while a single plank remained afloat. But, as a friendly adviser, he would recommend him to get as speedily as possible into still water."

The minister thus assailed, was not unequal to the occasion. His character and policy were alike challenged by the subtlest and most powerful of his adversaries. He seems to have been thoroughly roused to a sense of what he owed to himself and his colleagues, and the great party out of doors that supported them ; and, evading no portion of the issue, he made the happiest and ablest speech of his life :—

"I readily admit the great power and eloquence of the noble and learned Lord. His clearness in argument and dexterity in sarcasm, no one can deny ; and if he will be satisfied with a compliment confined strictly to ability, I am ready to render him that homage. But, my Lords, ability is not everything, propriety of conduct—the *verecundia*—should be combined with the *ingenium*, to make a great man and a statesman. It is not enough to be *duræ frontis, perditiæ audaciæ*. The noble and learned Lord has referred to several historical characters, to whom he has been pleased to say that I bear some resemblance. I beg in return to remind him of what once was said by Lord Bristol of a great statesman of former times (the Earl of Strafford) to whom, I think, the noble and learned Lord might not in-

applicably be compared : 'The malignity of his practices was hugely aggravated by his vast talents, whereof God hath given the use, but the devil the application.' What must the House think of the noble and learned Lord when he concludes his speech with a miserable motion for returns, which, from the numerous details entered upon by him in the course of his address, he appears scarcely to stand in need of? He takes credit to himself and his party, for having behaved with the greatest meekness and leniency towards me and my colleagues throughout the course of the present session. Now, let me ask, Why was it that noble Lords took up this meek and patient line of conduct? Was it because they were not willing to take upon themselves the government of the country, if we were removed? or was it that they approved of our measures, and were willing to retain us in power? If they did not approve of our measures, if they did not approve of the line of conduct we are pursuing in the administration of affairs, why, let me ask, did they not make some motion of censure? But they distrusted in fact, not us, but their own power in the country. The noble and learned Lord boasts that they are ready to appeal to the people; then, in Heaven's name why not do so? Why do they not take some steps towards an appeal of this kind, as by an address to the Crown for our removal? That would be a course which would speedily operate as an appeal to the feelings of the nation, such as the noble and learned Lord seems so anxiously to desire, and the result of which would be to convince him that the country at large has no participation in the opinions professed by himself and his party. Indeed, the noble Lords on the opposite side of the House seem to have silently acknowledged this melancholy truth, for although his speech was of a nature calculated to create a great and deep impression on the minds of those who heard him, I could not but observe that the cheers with which he was greeted were faint and feeble in the extreme: for noble Lords know well that, if they pledged themselves to the truth of all that fell from him, they would not be doing their duty if they allowed the administration of affairs to remain in the hands of his Majesty's present Government, during the period which must, in all probability, elapse between this and the next session of Parliament. It will not be expected of me to go through the retrospect of all that has occurred in the present session. If I were to do so, it is not probable that I should bring afresh to conviction your Lordships' minds in regard to those proceedings; and for myself I can only say that, after such a retrospect, I should still remain of opinion that the measures we have espoused have been good and proper ones, measures of which the country stood in need; and that the arguments by which they were supported were founded upon a firm basis of truth. The promises made in the King's speech were what I had the power of making, but their performance I could not command. Your Lordships it was who interfered, and prevented me from carrying those promises into effect. If your Lordships had not interfered in the way you have

done, and that upon grounds which I could hardly have anticipated, and in which, I must say, you stood entirely alone, many of the measures proposed would not have been impeded in their progress. You have thrown out the Registration of Voters Bill, the Post Office Bill, and the Catholic Marriages Bill, which had been agreed to by your own party in the House of Commons. You bring yourselves into this dilemma : one of two things is undoubtedly true ; either that the gentlemen of your party in the other House did not oppose these measures because they feared the unpopularity which would accrue to them for so doing, and chose rather to leave the task to you in this House—most improper conduct if it be so, which, however, I will not enter upon further ; or that those which you consider your friends elsewhere differ with you in respect to your opposition to these measures—in which case you must admit yourself to stand the while unsupported, in and out of Parliament, in rejecting measures which everybody but yourselves consider in the highest degree important and advantageous to the country. And this, I will candidly say, is a position in which I would not wish to see your Lordships stand in the eyes of the country. I have been accused of entertaining a desire to hold up to contempt the House of Lords, and break in upon its constitutional powers in the State. This is not the case. I know too well the assistance and the services which such a branch of the constitution is capable of rendering to the State ; and I know full well that the State stands in need of all the honest service which it can command. It is not me, then, whom your Lordships have to accuse, but your own conduct only, if you find your power and influence with the people upon the decline. If it should ever happen that the party opposite should hold office again, and you should find yourselves bringing forward the very measures which you are now rejecting, as has happened to you before, it will be much less easy for you to explain that conduct to the satisfaction of the public, and to your own consciences, than it is for me to stand erect under the load which the noble and learned Lord says I have pressing me down.”

Finally, with reference to his own position between a country growing apathetic in prosperity, and the Court growing daily adverse, and even discourteous, in its demeanour, he felt that his best safety lay in plainness and boldness of speech :—

“The noble and learned Lord kindly advises me to resign, notwithstanding his own great horror of taking office after his ambition is already so fully satisfied. But I will tell the noble and learned Lord that I will not be accessory to the sacrifice of himself, which he would be ready to make if the burthen of the Great Seal were again forced upon him. I conscientiously believe that the well-being of the country requires in the judgment of the people that I should hold my present office—and hold it I will—until I am removed.”

In this memorable duel neither of the combatants lost temper, and, being men of the world, frankly owned the skill of each other's fence. Lyndhurst is said to have crossed the House when it was over, and

chatted laughingly with his former colleague, as often was his way.¹ The cautious Ripon told Charles Greville that he thought the attack indiscreet;² and the Duke of Wellington, who thought skirmishing of this kind useful, provided he was not compromised by the reckless dash of a subordinate, quietly paced the *champ clos* of debate, moodily hinting disapprobation, but evincing no disposition to put his lance in rest. Lord Holland thought the reply of his leader admirable, and he was a critic not easily satisfied.

Timidity and time-serving cavilled at the Premier's words, and blamed him for thus publicly giving warning to the King. But Melbourne knew with whom he had to deal, and understanding thoroughly the danger and the duty of the hour, shrank from neither. When ill-treated by the Sovereign in 1834 he had not complained. When recalled to power he had not by look or word exulted. The frequently recurring overflow of royal vexation did not provoke him in the closet or at the council-table, to utter a syllable to chafe susceptibilities which he knew could not be controlled. Individually he was willing to bear silently the frowardness that too clearly was attributable to the spite of others rather than to any set purpose on the part of the aged monarch. But when the peace and progress of the country were at stake, and the balance of the constitution threatened, and the forms of legislation seemed to be made use of to compass the short-sighted designs of an eager minority, in defiance of the preponderant will of the nation, he threw aside his courtier gloves and stood, as his ancestor had done in the Commons of James II., firm and outspoken for the supreme authority of Parliament. He had been brought up at the knee of Fox; had mourned in youth over his grave; and now, when placed in circumstances not dissimilar, he recalled his language and his example. When George III., in 1782, was compelled by the House of Commons to accept the Whigs, they felt that their power of rescuing the country from the perils which then encompassed it was insecure, unless the tenure on which that power rested was clearly recognised. On the night that Lord North resigned Fox declared that, as the House had now proved their abhorrence of government by influence, they must take care that it should not be renewed. The new ministers must ever bear in mind that fact, and remember that to the House they owed their situations.³

¹ Campbell's 'Life of Lyndhurst,' p. 116.

² The 'Greville Memoirs,' vol. iii. p. 362.

³ Parl. Hist. vol. xxii. p. 1221, March 20th, 1732.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LATTER DAYS OF WILLIAM IV.

Irish appointments—Guests at the Palace—Financial crisis—Death of Augustus Lamb—Dissatisfaction of the Speaker—Correspondence with the Bishop of Ripon.

AT the close of the Session the ministerial sky was indeed heavily overcast. Radicals and Tories alternately and sometimes co-operatively attacked the Government in the Commons; Charles Buller, Hume, and Duncombe, being the most outspoken in adverse criticism. On several questions they could command but small majorities consisting, as they were daily reminded, of Catholic votes. From this text denunciations were incessantly hurled against them by name. Exeter Hall rang with invectives; and the judgments of heaven were foretold from the pulpit as certain to fall upon a nation that tolerated admission of Papists to the Privy Council, and mixed education in primary schools. The Protestant faith was said to be in danger from a combination of godless Whigs and surpliced emissaries of Rome, and the jealousies of race were diligently excited to fan and inflame those of creed. Remonstrance could hardly get a hearing out of doors; and within the nearly balanced state of parties rendered from day to day the issue on every question of legislative detail uncertain. Symptoms of weariness and disgust appeared in the looks and language of more than one of the Cabinet, and Hobhouse thought that—

“Even quiet and courageous Lord Melbourne began to give way. At our meeting on the 9th of August, when we discussed whether Parliament should meet in November, and the decision turned on the position of the Administration, our Chief told us that he had doubts whether it was right and becoming to go on in our present condition; the difficulties of which he proceeded to lay bare in all plainness of speech.¹ He said that a man must have the patience of an ass to stand against such odds; but he saw no reason for meeting in November unless it was probable that the Lords would give way on the Irish Corporation Bill, and for his part he thought they were less likely to concede if we forced a meeting in November than if we met at the usual time.”²

This was his habitual way of dealing with those he trusted. Without mutual candour he felt there could be no thorough confidence and no true cohesion: and without oneness of purpose and spirit he knew that they could not weather the gale. If the heart of any were failing, better let them say so in time, and give place to others who were more stout and strenuous; or if the waverers had become numerous let them agree to strike their flag before they were beaten men. But no

¹ ‘Reollections,’ p. 323.

² ‘Hobhouse,’ vol. iii. pp. 269, 270.

good could possibly come of delusion or disguise. If they had still faith in him and their cause, he would not give way ; but they must show it and he must know it. And thus with a sharp and sometimes startling knock, he would try the tire of every wheel before each fresh departure. When satisfied that all was sound, he would saunter down to the House of Lords, throw himself back in his seat and listen imperturbably to the raillery or rage of his opponents, with an expression of complete content, and an occasional intimation that he thought them very foolish people :—

“Lord Lansdowne said to me, privately, that, if the Lords carried a vote of want of confidence, he, for one, would resign. He thought they would not propose that vote, because they were afraid of putting themselves in the wrong. I dissented from this view ; but Lord Lansdowne repeated his determination. Lord Holland also expressed his doubts as to the propriety of going on much longer against the House of Lords, especially if we lost any more elections in large communities.”¹

The exhumation of an obsolete process of the Court of Exchequer, termed a writ of rebellion, and its application by that tribunal to enforce the payment of tithes, caused a new excitement throughout the southern provinces of Ireland. Resistance to the unpopular charge had been carried on through the instrumentality of social combinations rather than by any legal strategy to defeat the force of law. The judges ruled that, upon proof made before them that the parish where tithes were unpaid was in a state of sedition, the ordinary proceedings in an action for debt might be dispensed with, and that a writ of rebellion having been served, judgment, with heavy costs, might be recovered, and execution issued, without any trial in the county where the cause of action arose. It was a flank movement so formidable that it threatened completely to turn the popular position ; and eventually it was destined to put an end to the anti-tithe war, which had now lasted seven years. Many desperate expedients were proposed ; but amongst others that to which the following note refers :—

“I see, with great dismay, in the newspapers, the proposition of Henry Grattan at this foolish association of theirs, to proclaim a Hibernian reward for any policeman who refuses to act in the execution of a writ of rebellion. This is too bad. You will I suppose be soon in Dublin. I have written to Mulgrave by to-night's post upon the subject.”²

By the death of Baron Smith a vacancy was created in the Court of Exchequer, which Plunket recommended should be offered to O'Loghlen, not only because of his pre-eminent fitness and priority of claim, but because it afforded the opportunity, long desired, of placing a Catholic on the Bench. The Lord Lieutenant, concurring entirely in these views, wrote without delay to the Attorney-General, who was then

¹ ‘Hobhouse,’ vol. iii. pp. 269, 270.

² To Spring Rice, South Street, August 22nd, 1835, MS.

abroad, that being "desirous to promote whatever he might consider as his interest, he did not feel that he could do otherwise than offer him, without hesitation, the vacant seat in the Exchequer ; at the same time he could not attempt to conceal that he should much regret to lose his valuable assistance in his present post, and that he made the proposal with some hope that he might prefer continuing, for the present, Attorney-General, a decision which he should learn with great satisfaction."¹ On the same day the Chief Secretary wrote, in terms of equal compliment, to the same effect. From Paris the reply of O'Loghlen reiterated the opinion he had frequently expressed that the Attorney-General ought not to accept the place of a Puisne Judge, but leave the reward of learning and service to some less fortunate member of the profession. He preferred remaining at the head of the Bar, and retaining his seat in the House of Commons. Difficulties arose, however, as to filling up the office of Solicitor-General, which the promotion of Mr. Richards would have rendered necessary ; and, ultimately, though not without extreme reluctance, he consented to become the Baron of the Exchequer, while Mr. Woulffe was made Solicitor-General. O'Loghlen, however, did not waive his equitable title to a higher station ; and although it was impossible that any condition should be made, the Government felt that they owed him a real obligation for the manner in which he had acted ; and on the retirement of Sir William MacMahon in 1837, he was advanced to the position of Master of the Rolls. Before accepting this lucrative and important office, he voluntarily suggested, however, that should it become possible at any future time for O'Connell to be appointed in his stead, he should be allowed to make way for him. O'Loghlen's sense of what he in common with the whole Catholic Bar owed to their Liberator was deep and lasting : greater still the grateful sense of obligation which he cherished for signal acts of personal kindness, on many important occasions. But O'Connell was in no respects cognizant at the time of the curious suggestion made by his friend when about to accept the Rolls. His own thoughts had never turned in that direction. He would undoubtedly have liked the offer of the Attorney-Generalship. That was the situation for which he was peculiarly fitted, and which had for him all the attractions of professional distinction and political power. It has indeed been supposed that, at the commencement of the session of this year, Melbourne actually proposed it to him, and that he would have been appointed but for the peremptory refusal of the King. Such an idea could only have arisen from some misapprehension that cannot now be explained. Whatever the Premier's disposition may have been or his appreciation of the benefit that might have accrued from such an appointment, it was at that moment utterly impossible. His Cabinet would certainly have never agreed to what they would have naturally considered an act of suicide ; and even if they had, it is wholly incredible that the

¹ Earl of Mulgrave to Mr. O'Loghlen, September 9th, 1836, MS.

proposal would have been sanctioned by William IV., then more than ever out of humour with his ministers. In Ireland the elevation of Baron O'Loughlen to the highest seat in Equity to which a Catholic was then eligible, was highly popular ; and the manner in which he performed his duties at the Rolls, speedily disarmed all party criticism.

For some time William IV. persisted in omitting the members of the Cabinet from his invitations to dinner ; and, except the officers of the household, no one holding political office partook of his hospitality. His favourite guests were those who were most distinguished for their adverse zeal. Charles Greville, himself intensely Conservative, calls him a true King of the Tories, and believed 'he was only waiting an opportunity to get rid of the Liberals. Many stories are told of the caprices and oddities of his manner at this time. He was fond of giving dinners at which the guests were bidden in accordance with a fancy of his own, on account of their belonging to a particular profession or calling. One day he had an equal number of military and naval officers, with the officials belonging to their respective departments. The soldiers were ranged on one side of the table, and the sailors on the other. His Majesty gave several toasts with appropriate speeches by way of preface. That of the evening was, the health of the two services, whose valour and devotion he loudly extolled. They should never forget that it was their peculiar good fortune to serve a country where men of all ranks from the highest to the lowest were eligible to command. "Here on my right," said the King with especial emphasis, "is my noble friend descended from a line of ancestry as ancient as my own ; and here on my left is my gallant friend, a rear admiral sprung from the very dregs of the people." On another day the banquet was given to prelates and clerical dignitaries of various degrees. The toasts were appropriately ecclesiastical. That of the Church was prefaced by its temporal head with an account of his own change of opinions :—

"When I was a young man, as well as I can remember, I believed in nothing but pleasure and folly ; nothing at all. But when I went to sea, got into a gale, and saw the wonders of the mighty deep, then I believed ; and I have been a sincere Christian ever since."

William IV. had never tried to conceal his mortification at having had to take back the Whigs ; and as the chance of his ever being able to get rid of them lessened with his sense of failing health, he gave way more and more to petulance and discourtesy. At a Privy Council on the 21st of September the Chancellor, Melbourne, Palmerston, Russell, Minto, Glenelg and Labouchere being present, his demeanour was most ungracious. When the petition of Captain Sartorius for reinstatement to his rank was read, he said, without asking the opinion of the First Lord of the Admiralty, that its prayer must be granted, for Commodore Napier was restored when he knew he was doing wrong, while Captain Sartorius might have believed himself doing only that which was right. Lord Minto felt it to be his duty as First

Lord of the Admiralty to state the reasons which led him to take a somewhat different view. The King, who was out of temper, said sharply :—

“ Unless your Lordship is quite sure of that, I must beg leave to say that I differ from you, and I do not believe it to be so. I desire you will furnish me with proofs of it immediately. The next time I see you, you will be prepared with the proofs of what you say, for unless I see them I shall not believe one word of it.”

No response was made by the offended minister to this strange sally. His colleagues looked at one another and then at their chief. It was one of the occasions where his *un*-common sense served him better than more heroic qualities. He would hardly have been justified under other circumstances in listening silently to such words addressed in council to one whose honour was untarnished, and for whom having lately named him for the high post he filled he was not indirectly responsible. But Melbourne knew better than those around him the waywardness and weakness of the aged Prince ; and could better make allowance for his vexation at being surrounded by ministers he had once dismissed and longed to dismiss again. To furnish him with a pretence for quarrels or to precipitate a crisis upon grounds which the public could never be made to comprehend, would have been unpardonable folly. The power to shut one's eyes is as valuable a privilege at times as the right to keep them open and look stern. The fate of his party he had long felt was in his hands, and a hot word or a hasty step might plunge everything into confusion. He suggested therefore without comment that the petition of Sartorius should be referred to the Admiralty to report upon, and this being the last business of the day the Council thereupon broke up. When they reassembled on the 5th of October, the report being favourable, the gallant officer was restored. Melbourne took care to be present ; the First Lord of the Admiralty did not attend ; and by that time the fretful mood of valetudinarian Majesty had passed away.¹

It was proposed about this time to confer the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland, vacant since the death of Sir George Hill, on Mr. Sheil. The office had been held before the Union by Mr. Flood and other distinguished men, and it had always been regarded as a parliamentary office. For the sake of retrenchment, the finance committee of 1830 had recommended that the salary should be reduced, and that it should be held in future *quamdiu se bene gesserit*, and that it should not be compatible with a seat in the House of Commons. The difficulty had been overlooked in the first instance, and we find the First Lord asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer for fuller information on the subject :—

“ You never informed me what I was to say to Sheil respecting the

¹ In Mr. Greville's account of the transaction there is obviously some inaccuracy ; that he did not hear correctly what was said by Lord Minto, is evident from the expressions ascribed to the King.

Vice-Treasurership of Ireland. Just send me word of the nature of the intended arrangement; pray let me know anything else about appointments and arrangements. I am to have Dudley Stuart and his deputation bothering about the Poles to-morrow at three. Pray come too.”¹

An illustration of the gentle way in which he exercised a superintending influence over all departments of the Government, for which his rare diversity of knowledge of men and things especially qualified him, is afforded by a question addressed to one of his colleagues *en passant* between other topics of greater interest, regarding the Board of Medical Examiners recently constituted—Sir Anthony Carlisle, an odd but clever man, had written to him in a certain tone of jealousy at having been omitted:—

“He is an eccentric man, but a man of ability. I know not upon what principle you have selected the names, and whether it is one which would exclude him, but your list appears to me to be rather weak in surgery.”²

The Premier remained in or near town during the autumn, noting with anxious care the darkening signs of the times. His prescient misgivings in the beginning of the year were but too fatally realised, though many circumstances beyond his ken contributed to deepen the financial embarrassment and industrial affliction that ensued. Then plenteous corn crops in succession, and a great expansion of trade rendered food abundant, prices high, and the revenue overflowing; but joint-stock speculation, especially in banking, ran more and more wild. Till April the bank rate of interest did not exceed three and a half per cent., and the country issues went on increasing during the summer, unchecked by warnings from a central source of supply, and the drain of gold which had set in from all parts of Europe, consequent upon the measures of President Jackson for the establishment of a metallic currency in the United States. Gloomy forebodings of a bad harvest were widely entertained in July, and by the end of August it was certain the yield would be short throughout the United Kingdom, and that corn would have to be more largely than ever purchased abroad. When the stock of bullion in the Bank of England had fallen to five millions, the rate of discount was advanced to four per cent., but it subsequently rose as the pressure for assistance grew more exigent. Failures were anticipated in London and other seats of industry, and threatening symptoms multiplied of a commercial panic nigh at hand. Melbourne marked with anxious solicitude the presages of impending storm. To the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had gone to Ireland after the Session, he wrote:—

“Baring³ has informed you of all that has been done with respect to the money market, and also that it would be better that you should

¹ Notes from South Street, August 15th and 21st, 1836.

² From Downing Street, September 8th, 1836, MS.

³ Francis, eldest son of Sir Thomas Baring of Stratton, was then Financial Secretary of the Treasury; in 1839, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

be upon the spot. I am sorry to interrupt your holidays, but considering the general anxiety which prevails, and the vast interests which are concerned, and that it is probable that decisive steps may be necessary to be taken, I think you will agree with me that the sooner you are here the better.”¹

But things went speedily from bad to worse, and Melbourne's anxieties increased daily, though he preserved throughout the same air of equanimity, and strove to impart his own cheeriness of spirit to dejected comrades and desponding friends. Confidentially he wrote on the 20th of October :—

“There is a great outcry and some apprehension, how well-founded it is impossible to say when there is necessarily so much self-interest always at work, and so many private ends to be promoted. I do not mind the railing nor the abuse, but I think it would be awkward if half a dozen houses were to come tumbling about our ears in your absence. Pray therefore that you get back upon the intelligence of the first failure—I know in such a conjuncture little can be done, but the use of constant and firm language is necessary, and for that the presence of as much authority as can be mustered is desirable.”²

A week later he wrote :—

“I was talking to Baring yesterday about your coming. Of course your absence gives rise to a good deal of observation, but he said, and I agree with him, that as it had been given out that you were not to return until November, your coming earlier might excite apprehension, and give rise to a supposition of greater alarm than the Government really feel. But he seemed to think, and in this also I agree with him, that the sooner you could be here after the first of November the better. The measures, as you say, have in fact been bold, but the throwing away two or three hundred thousand pounds of the public money is often very little thought of, whilst, on the contrary, inconveniencing and discontenting the moneyed men creates a clamour as shrill and as unappeasable as does the killing of a pig. Nothing is so violent as a moneyed interest in difficulties, nothing so loud, and it is often, in my opinion, politic to commit a little extravagance in order to relieve them. I say nothing of the state of things, because as I write from here you will have received a more recent account before you receive this.”³

Spring Rice returned forthwith to London ; and remained at his post in constant communication with the financial authorities in the city.

As one of the measures to allay the panic and afford relief to the Money Market, it was resolved to offer an increased rate of interest to a certain amount on Exchequer bills. Like all expedients of the kind, it was open to the objection that it must work partially, and in many cases profitably, to those who stood the least in need of extra-

¹ From Downing Street, September 8th, 1836, MS.

² From Downing Street, MS.

³ From Brocket Hall, October 28th, 1836, MS.

ordinary aid of the State ; while the aid must confessedly be furnished at the expense of the whole community. As a precedent, moreover, it was seriously to be deprecated on constitutional as well as economic grounds. This was no doubt the consideration which led Melbourne to write a laconic note, amounting to a command, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should forthwith communicate to his Majesty the nature and extent of the measure in contemplation :—

“ I think you should send a statement of our determination to the King, in order that he may know it before it is made public.”¹

It was about this time that certain admirers of Wordsworth applied to the Government for such a pension as would distinctively acknowledge his claim as the first of living poets. Melbourne had no objection to a liberal grant, but, “ as a critic he could not sanction it, if it was to be taken as affirming the position that he was the first poet of the country or even of the age. There must be a *protestando* to this effect in the grant.”²

Lord Mulgrave's recommendation, approved by Lord J. Russell, was, after consideration,³ sanctioned by him that Lords Miltown and Talbot de Malahide, Baron Richards, Mr. Villiers Stuart, the Chief Remembrancer Mr. A. R. Blake, and Mr. (afterwards Lord) Carew, should be added to the Privy Council of Ireland.

A provision in a recent act which had passed without debate or protest caused no little outcry in Norfolk and Suffolk about this time, because it required the owner's name of a taxed cart to be painted on it in letters two instead of one inch long, as had been the custom heretofore. Lord Albemarle undertook to represent the grievance of his tenants and neighbours to the head of the Government which he did with no little emphasis, informing him that Radicals and Tories united in the outcry, and that many, while complying with the new law, added under the hated letters, “ badge imposed by the Whigs.” “ It is too foolish,” said Melbourne, “ but I suppose there is no great reason for the thing, and we may promise to alter it ;”⁴ it was done the following session.

As the constitution of his afflicted son betrayed increasing signs of giving way from the frequency of the attacks to which he had long been subject, his solicitude about him increased in tenderness. He sat frequently in his room for hours, and watched with care every change in the sufferer's condition. He mentioned afterwards, not without emotion, that the evening before the event long anticipated, he was occupied in writing letters, when an incident occurred like that which he had heard of in other cases, and of which till then he had been incredulous :—

“ Augustus was lying on a sofa near me ; he had been reading, but

¹ From South Street, November 17th, MS.

² From Downing Street, October 20th, 1836, MS.

³ MS. memorandum in Lord Melbourne's handwriting, November 17th, 1836. See *Dublin Gazette*.

⁴ Letter from South Street.

I thought had dropped asleep. Suddenly he said to me in a quiet and reflective tone : 'I wish you would give me some franks, that I may write and thank people who have been kind in their inquiries.' The pen dropped from my hand as if I had been struck ; for the words and the manner were as clear and thoughtful as if no cloud had ever hung heavily over him. I cannot give any notion of what I felt ; for I believed it to be as it proved the summons they call the lightning before death. In a few hours he was gone."¹

Pitiful is the commonplace of condolence which implies, if it does not directly plead in deprecation of sorrow that the termination of protracted suffering must be regarded rather as a relief. To one who in the midst of political excitements and social flatteries had never ceased to watch anxiously and to grieve silently over his afflicted son it would have been a poor mockery of comfort this, that thenceforth there remained no object of his woman-like care. It has been finely said "that the fulness of sorrow is great, but how much greater is its emptiness."²

In a private letter during the winter of 1836, we find him complaining that lameness in the right knee prevented his leaving home for some days, which he attributed to gout.³ In reply to inquiries about his health, which had for some weeks been such as to disable him from taking active exercise, he added :—

"I am rather worse than I was ; at least during these last two nights I have had more pain. But these rheumatic affections when they get hold of one, are not got rid of in a moment."

The following week he was "getting better, but was still confined to the house and would be for some days."

In an army whose comparative strength does not enable it to make rapid progress, there are always importunates for promotion, and malcontents who want some mark of distinction, as they say. Self-interest can afford to be considerate on the sanguine eve of victory, but it grows very matter-of-fact in its grumblings, when the odds look doubtful. All the winter the Premier was beset with applications for titles and decorations, steps in the peerage and imperial coronets, by Scotch and Irish nobles. The Court was believed to be unyielding, and therefore must be pressed to grant each sighed-for honour ere the final *fracas* came. Melbourne, whose difficulties were fully revealed to few, had frugally to husband his resources and make his patronage go as far as he could : and when a pluralist of honours dropped, he took care to part his coat of many colours among covetous brethren. In December he writes :—

"From what I hear it is not to be expected that the Duke of Montrose will last very long. His lieutenantancies it will not be difficult to supply. In the county of Stirling there is Lord Abercromby and Mr. Murray of Polmain and for the county of Dumbarton, Sir James

¹ November 27th, 1836. ² Trelawny, in 'The Adventures of a Younger Son.'

³ From South Street, December 9th, 1836, MS.

Colquhoun, the properest person, has stated to the Lord Advocate some time since his determination to support the present Government. But what do you say about the Blue Riband? Carlisle I believe to be desirous of it, and he is in every respect a proper person. The Duke of Somerset has shown no disposition to support us. I should like to know your opinion upon the subject. John Russell is very anxious that I should propose to the King to make three or four peers before the meeting of Parliament. I have never seen much advantage in this step myself, and I am puzzled about the people. Some promises were made by Grey and confirmed by me. Portman and Rosebery would be very good, and might be made without inconvenience, as they vacate no seats in the House of Commons. But Fraser of Lovat, and Caulfield, Lord Charlemont's brother, are not so well. I fear the effect which these creations might have in Ireland and Scotland, where there are so many who think themselves to be better entitled to the honour. I fear indeed the consequences of the step altogether. I am apprehensive that though it gives little strength, it will create much discontent. I hope you will consider the foreign question well before the meeting, that we may make the best defence we can. I do not expect a very serious attack upon the Poor Law in Parliament, but we should be prepared with a full defence, and also we should think well upon this question of joint-stock banks. I am convinced there is no mode of entirely preventing the abuse of credit; but it may perhaps be checked."¹

It was agreed that Lord Carlisle should have the Garter; and he recommended Lords Ducie, Yarborough, and Howard of Effingham to be made Earls. Beyond these and an English Barony for Lord Lovat he was not disposed to go.²

What was to be done with the vexed question of Irish Church establishment? The prospect daily grew more dim of any accommodation between the two Houses on the subject. To the appropriation clause both the previous and the existing House of Commons were pledged, and by the deliberate reiteration of that pledge, the Liberals had displaced their rivals, and had undertaken to govern the country. Yet so hopeless seemed the chance of the House of Lords being induced to yield, and so urgent was the need of a settlement of the tithe question on some basis of compromise, that on all sides ministers were now pressed to abandon the appropriation clause, and attempt some other method of dealing with the perplexity. Elaborate statements prepared under the auspices of Mr. Drummond were brought by Lord Morpeth under the consideration of the Premier. In transmitting them to Lord Lansdowne, he observed:—

"I very much agree with those who think that if we decided upon pressing the appropriation clause no further, we should give it up at once, clearly and distinctly saying that we brought it forward because

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, from South Street, December 29th, 1836, MS.

² From South Street, January 2nd, 1837, MS.

we thought it right and just in itself, and conducive to the interests of Ireland ; and because we conceived it to be in accordance with the opinion of the people, as it certainly was with that of the majority of the House of Commons of 1834, which majority in fact forced the measure upon us. But supposing our course decided upon this point, what are we to do then ? The various plans of providing for the payment of all religions will, I feel certain, entirely fail ; and I do not think we should be justified in proposing them upon the principle stated by Morpeth, of the weakened state of the Government, and the hopelessness of its continuance. A minister has no more right to treat a case as desperate than has a physician ; events are too uncertain, and results differ too much from anticipations, to permit such conduct. If, on the other hand, it were thought prudent to confine ourselves to a measure, such as Duncannon suggests, which should merely facilitate and quicken the operation of Stanley's Act, I feel convinced that we should not be able to pursue such a course. The Opposition would press upon us, and that irresistibly, the settlement of the tithe question, and the reformation of the chapters, the benefices, etc., in respect of which objects they would profess themselves willing to co-operate with us. The only mode of acting then left for us is to bring in, as O'Connell suggests, the bill of 1834, and to add to it such changes of the present state of the establishment as may seem expedient."¹

Events more than justified ere long, the sagacity of his patience and persistency. Had he yielded to the promptings of vexation or despondency at the close of 1836, the great administrative experiment of sectarian equality which he had undertaken, would be said to have practically failed. Municipal self-government, under the advice of Sir R. Peel and Lord Lyndhurst, would have been permanently swept away in Ireland, and because a majority of her people went to Mass, they would have been declared by the imperial Parliament disinherited of the primary rights of citizenship ; servile war against the Anglican clergy, with all its barbarising horrors, would have been prolonged indefinitely ; men would still have been tried for their lives by judges and juries belonging to the creed of one-tenth of the community ; royalty would have been once more identified in the minds of millions with the policy of oppression, and to use the words of Lord J. Russell, Ireland would still "have been occupied not governed." Melbourne, disheartened but undismayed, did not to his friend affect to see his way. He only thought and said they ought to hold their ground till they were driven from it by the power that had placed them there. They did so, and before six weeks an unlooked-for majority of eighty ratified their policy, and before six months the crown had devolved on a youthful Sovereign, who placed in them unlimited confidence, and whose name was to be associated in Ireland with every measure of lasting peace and progress. Well might it be said that "a minister has no more right to treat a case as desperate than has a physician."

¹ From South Street, December 26th, 1836, MS.

Mr. Abercromby had, after the experience of two years, begun to share the conviction of his best friends that his ability and temper were not those that fitted him to fill the Speaker's chair. His voice was not melodious, his presence was not imposing, his nervous system was not sufficiently under his control to enable him to wear the aspect of equanimity he did not feel. The House in a boisterous and wayward mood gave little heed to his ruling, and none to his remonstrance. He gradually shrank from committing himself to decisions which were not certain to be obeyed. He lived in a perpetual fret of misgiving and disappointment, and secretly began to wish that he could escape from a position which, however distinguished and lucrative, he felt that he never could enjoy. Still, it never occurred to any one who remembered his exultation on attaining it, that he would think of retiring before his time; and great was the astonishment of the Premier when, on Christmas eve, Lord J. Russell forwarded to him a letter from the Speaker, complaining that he had not been properly supported in the chair, lamenting that he had lost the confidence of the House, and expressing his determination to resign. Both immediately wrote to him, representing the embarrassment and unfairness of such a step at such a moment, and requesting him to reconsider it :—

"I have little hope," said Melbourne, "of shaking his purpose, and if he perseveres in it, what is to be done? If Spring Rice still desires the position, I know not how we can do otherwise than give him all the assistance in our power; but I hope the consideration of the difficulty there would be in filling up his post at the Treasury, will induce him to place himself and his claims in John Russell's hands. But supposing this the case, what is to be done? A country gentleman who would make no vacancy in the Government would be the best, and some have mentioned C. Shaw Lefevre. John Russell thinks that Cutlar Fergusson would be the best, but I should rather doubt his being induced to undertake it."¹

Mr. Abercromby's irritability was soothed, and he consented for a season to resume his presidential functions. The Speaker had suggested several improvements, both in the public and private business of the House, which the greatly increased extent and variety of both rendered desirable. But ministers, whose attention was absorbed by more urgent matters, did not respond as readily as he expected, and, practically, his proposals were allowed to stand over to a more convenient season. His temper, which by nature was despondent and over-susceptible, chafed at what he took for disrespectful neglect. He had committed himself in private with the leading men on both sides, to the expression of his opinion, that certain changes in the standing orders and the procedure of the House were necessary; and when they were not taken up by Government, he resented what he (probably alone) regarded as humiliating, and as tending to lower his authority in the chair. Hence his offer to resign.

¹ From Downing Street, December 26th, 1836, MS.

About the middle of January the King caused an intimation to be given to ministers that he did not intend to open Parliament in person, assigning as his reason the illness of the Duchess of Gloucester. He desired that a council should be summoned to meet at Brighton on the 28th instant, to settle the Speech from the Throne; and he wished to have a copy of what was intended three or four days beforehand. The heads of the chief departments were consequently requested to consider the topics to which they respectively wished that the attention of the legislature should be directed:—

“We must begin to think what we shall say. These money affairs may shift their appearance from day to day, but we must take our chance of that and make alterations if they become necessary.”¹

Whether his Majesty knew that the Opposition designed to move an amendment on the address, impeaching the general conduct of affairs the Premier was possibly not aware; but he could not be mistaken regarding the impression that would be created by the King's absence from town on the occasion, and the public indication thus given of his reluctance to be identified more than he could help with the proceedings of his ministers. In the Speech from the Throne a settlement of the Irish Municipal question was again brought under the consideration of Parliament; and the newly-appointed Attorney-General, Woulffe, a man whose varied culture, knowledge of the world, and philosophic indifference to the heats of party especially commended him to his chief, was charged with the conduct of the Bill. O'Connell, advertng to Lyndhurst's plea in bar of alienage, argued that, if it were held good every idea of cementing an incorporate union of the two countries must be abandoned. Stanley rejected his pretension to speak in the name of Ireland, admitted that the old municipalities could no longer be maintained, but deprecated the creation of new ones, which would prove as exclusively Catholic as the existing bodies had been exclusively Protestant. In reply Sheil delivered the greatest of his speeches to a crowded and excited house. He staked the whole issue on the question—were the bulk of the Irish people aliens and to be treated as such by law? As he recalled the memories of common service and suffering in which the two races had struggled and triumphed together against foreign foes, and appealed to the great commander himself if in Europe's greatest agony and peril, “the aliens blenched,”²—he turned and waved his hand to where Lord Lyndhurst and other peers sat under the gallery,—the majority of the audience rose from their seats and betrayed an excitement of feeling unlike anything that has occurred within those walls before or since that day. It is not indeed too much to say that the ill-starred taunt of alienage rendered resistance to the creation of municipal institutions in Ireland eventually unavailing. In the following session the controversy was indeed renewed, but a section

¹ From South Street, January 16th, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

² Hansard, February 23rd, 1837.

of the Conservatives, led by Lord Eliot, seceded from their party on the question, and with some reservations, most of which subsequently were swept away, corporate privileges were in 1840 made the same on both sides of the Channel.

The Primate led the opposition to the Church Rate Bill in a tone of unaccustomed acrimony, which provoked Melbourne into language construed if not intended to be inimical to the Church. Bishop Blomfield rejoined, defending his metropolitan and attacking ministers sharply. The new Bishop of Ripon wrote explaining his vote in Opposition, and stating fully the views he entertained on the subject, and was answered by the Premier in a tone equally characteristic and creditable :—

“ I thank you for your letter. It is consistent with the frankness and integrity of your character, and it is much better to explain differences than to leave them to silent reflection and consequent exaggeration. I have received your communication of course without surprise. Your having been present at the meeting at Lambeth, and your having then sanctioned the unusual course determined upon, was already a sufficient indication of the opinion which you had formed upon the measure which had been opened to the House of Commons. That course was politically the most hostile that could be devised, and being taken without the slightest notice or intimation, was personally neither civil nor considerate. Your Lordship was in a new situation on that occasion, and could not, perhaps, be expected to take a prominent part ; but I own that I feel hurt that the Bishop of Ely, however he might agree in the general opinion of the meeting, did not object to the hasty and precipitate declaration of that opinion, recommended as I understand upon political grounds, and to which there exist strong objections both of constitutional principle and of general prudence. I do not, of course, concur in your views, either of the principle or of the consequences of the proposed measure, or I should not be found amongst its supporters. The question with me upon this, as upon other measures, is,—is it in itself just and expedient, not by what arguments it is defended, or with what views it is desired. If persons heretofore had suffered themselves to be misled from the contemplation of the questions themselves, into the ulterior designs and objects of their advocates, no measure of reformation or amelioration would ever have been adopted. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was desired by many of the enemies of religious establishment, and because they thought that their ultimate objects would be advanced by that repeal. The relief of the Roman Catholics was approved by many as being a step to the subversion of the Protestant establishment in Ireland. If you suffer yourself to be deterred from facing the real merits of a subject by the erroneous arguments, or the culpable designs of others, it is at once obvious that you have adopted a line of action which bars all future progress, and precludes every hope of amendment. I am still less able to see how our measure subverts the principle of an established Church, or has any tendency to

the introduction of what is called the voluntary system. To me it appears to be of quite a different character. You will recollect that what we propose to do here has already been done in Ireland, and I am not prepared to admit that the established Church in that country has been in any degree weakened by that measure. I will fairly say that I do not think it probable that any further pecuniary means for increasing small livings, or giving more effectual religious instruction, are likely, in the present time, to be obtained from Parliament ; but I do not see that our measure throws in the way of such any obstacle which did not oppose itself before. If you think that the present law of church rates can be maintained and enforced, and that the evils which attend it are not so great as those which would be consequent upon its repeal, you are of course right in the line which you intend to pursue. If you think that the present law can be modified and changed, so as to render it at once more satisfactory and more effectual, I believe that you deceive yourself. If your conscience disapproves the measure you cannot support it. The disadvantage of your not doing so will fall solely upon me, who am continually subjected to the reproach of having disposed of more ecclesiastical patronage than any other minister within so short a period, and of having so managed it, as neither to secure one steady personal friend, nor one firm supporter of my own principles and opinions.”¹

The bishop replied :—

“The last paragraph in your letter, my dear Lord, has deeply touched me. I know and feel that you have been reproached for what I may be permitted to call the generous and disinterested line of conduct which has led you to extend your patronage to those whose political opinions are not in entire accordance with your own, and that I am at this moment in the enjoyment of comparative ease, affluence and honour by reason of that disinterestedness. This recollection I shall ever be most anxious to cherish, and while it aggravates the regret which I feel at being compelled to differ from you, it will ever bind me by the strongest ties of personal attachment to one who, in fact, has made so great a sacrifice for my advantage.”

The majority of eighty in favour of the Irish Municipal Bill seemed for the moment to reassure ministers and their friends. Melbourne wrote next day :—

“I consider the division last night capital, when you think of the combination of prejudice and interest against the measure, upon such a question as the Irish Municipal Bill.”²

The Radicals were in better humour with them, and twenty of their immediate connections, who could not bring themselves to vote for the Ballot, agreed to stay away on the division. The projects of opposition failed to realise the anticipations of their promoters. Stanley and Graham threw themselves heartily, but in vain, into the cause of

¹ March 11th, 1837.

² From South Street, March 16th, 1837, MS.

resistance to concession in Ireland, and O'Connell wrote exultingly, "that the recent division had placed the Ministry in an attitude of perfect security. The public sentiment was too powerful to permit their rivals to hope for office upon any other terms than throwing the Orange faction in Ireland overboard, and governing for the benefit of the people. Peel would act on this line of policy, but that he was hampered by his colleagues and supporters." There was much elation at the result. On the other hand the defeat of the British Legion under De Lacy Evans in Spain, and the increasing hostility of the Church and the Court, with the loss of several elections, so disheartened the Home Secretary, that he intimated, in private, his resolution to resign should the Lords throw out the Corporation Bill. Lord Spencer, whose disinterested opinion had more weight with his old colleague than that of any other man, wrote dissuading him from such a step so long as he was supported on the question by a decided preponderance in the Commons. Just then, at a reception of the Order of the Bath, the King took occasion to deliver one of his extra-constitutional orations, with the obvious purpose of letting it be known how intensely he hated his responsible advisers. Lord Aylmer had been recalled from Canada as governor, on the outbreak of the troubles there, but he was to receive the Grand Cross of the Bath as a mark of respect for his past services. When he was introduced his Majesty called on Lord Palmerston and Lord Minto, the only members of the Cabinet who were present, and made them stand one on each side of the new knight, whom he addressed in the most flattering terms, telling him "that he entirely approved of his official conduct, that he acted like a true and loyal subject towards a set of traitors and conspirators, and as became a British officer under the circumstances."

In the money market distrust and difficulty had not abated. Melbourne continued by personal correspondence and intercourse, to watch closely what was going on. Far from shirking the labour necessarily involved in keeping up a knowledge of details, we find him inviting persons of experience and rectitude, both official and unconnected with office, to communicate with him freely whenever they had anything of importance to state or suggest :—

"I have a note from Ellice to say that there is the greatest despair of all these arrangements with the American houses now failing, by the rigour of the Bank in demanding security, and by the doubts of the parties themselves as to their weathering the storm. I have sent to Spearman to come here. Could you do so too before the time."¹

There was never such weather for a minister who hated patronage. All the year it had rained garters and crosiers. There had been an epidemic among deans and judges, "and as for the bishops he positively believed they died to vex him." Salisbury being vacant, a clergyman in the diocese of high connections, and well known as a

¹ To F. Baring, from South Street, March 22nd, 1837.

Whig to many leading members of the party, "prayed Lansdowne to speak in favour of his being put forward on the occasion. Strong interests he believed had made Melbourne last year prefer persons to the sees then vacant ; two of whom he knew would vote against him." His own fidelity to political ties had been proved to be above temptation. The single-minded simplicity of this appeal, which was duly transmitted to the inexorable dispenser of mitres, was of no avail. Votes were very scarce in the House of Lords, and he had no reason to doubt that as a man of the world, and a man of family, the gentleman would keep his word ; but it would not do :—

"The real reason why I cannot make him is that I find that the appointment would be satisfactory in no point of view except a political one. He came late into the Church, had been in another profession, has kept very much aloof from the society of clergymen, and in short is not calculated for a bishop in these times. I must tell him this as well as I can ; but because I must vex him, I do not see why you should. You had better express yourself towards him as you feel, and throw the whole bother of his not being promoted upon me."¹

But Prelates and Knights of the Garter went on dying, and in the midst of weightier affairs he had to balance noble and most noble susceptibilities, and to compare nice shades of theological thought. With the reputation of indifferentism in matters of belief, and for cynical readiness to sacrifice the interest of the Church to those of party, there never was a man who laboured more conscientiously to seek out useful and unobjectionable men for the episcopate, or who was influenced less in his choice by predilections founded on mere coincidences of opinion. He wished to promote tolerant and enlightened men, provided they were faithful and efficient churchmen. In his perplexities he ever sought counsel from the friend in whose temper and discrimination, and high sense of duty, experience had taught him to rely without reserve :—

"I learn that Lord Bath is dead. I suppose from what has passed, it will be your opinion that the Duke of Somerset should have the Blue Riband, and Lord Cork the lieutenantancy. Does not Ilchester,² live in Somersetshire, and might he not expect the latter ? I shall take no step until I hear from you. Direct to Panshanger, where I am going to-morrow. I suppose the Bishop of Norwich is dead by this time, and although the report with respect to the Bishop of Lichfield was premature, I fear that he cannot last long. Are you still steady for Thirlwall ? I fear we shall have a contest about it. I have desired the Bishops of Ely and Chichester to look at his book, and let me know confidentially their opinions upon it. You mentioned to me once Mr. Wordsworth, the author of a 'Church History,' and the Bishop of Durham also recommended him. Is he of Oxford or Cambridge ? Are his opinions entirely Liberal, and could you

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, from Downing Street, March 2nd, 1837, MS.

² Brother of Lady Lansdowne.

learn for us whether he would go with us on the Church rate question?"¹

The Bishop of Chichester wrote that he found the formation of a just opinion of Thirlwall's book a tougher task, and requiring more labour than he had expected, and that he must therefore take some further time; while the Bishop of Ely came more promptly to a conclusion which was unfavourable to the degree of confidence in his orthodoxy which Thirlwall was likely to inspire:—

"I fear, said Melbourne, it is the judgment which would be pronounced by many of the impartial and informed. A louder outcry would of course be raised by others. I send you also a letter which I have received from Musgrave,² from whom I had wished to learn what was thought at Cambridge, and particularly by Sedgwick. I do not know that upon the whole Mr. Stanley of Alderley would not be the right choice. All that can be said against him is, that he has upon some occasions attended public meetings and spoken at them; but I have never heard his speeches accused of either violence or impropriety. John Russell is rather for proposing Arnold, but if we propose either Arnold or Thirlwall we run the risk of a rupture³ upon a church question; and are we justified in doing that? If, on the other hand, we succeed, we succeed by forcing the King against his conscience, which is not desirable, however that conscience may be constituted by ignorance or prejudice. We made him think, and not entirely without reason, that he has great ground of complaint, and we put him out of humour for some months, which, if we are to remain ministers, is neither pleasant nor advantageous to the public service; we also greatly offend a large portion of the public, detach from us a certain number of useful supporters, and increase the odium on that point upon which we ought to seek to diminish it; on the other hand we certainly gratify and confirm the largest and most trusty portion of those upon whom we rely."⁴

Dr. Stanley was appointed Bishop of Norwich; and the historian had to wait some years for promotion. Various judgments may be formed of the decision come to by the minister; there can be but one regarding his anxiety to do that which was right. In the letter just quoted, some account is given of a consultation at Woburn with Lord John, as to the course to be taken in certain eventualities respecting the Irish Corporation Bill. Having passed the Commons for the second time by a decisive majority, Melbourne thought they must, if they would preserve their characters for independence, refuse to acquiesce quietly, should the Lords reject it on the second reading. This upon the whole he did not anticipate. It was more likely that they would mutilate the measure in Committee, so as to deprive it of all its utility, or defer its consideration until the Tithes Bill was before

¹ From Woburn Abbey, March 29th, 1837, MS.

² Afterwards Archbishop of York.

³ With the King.

⁴ From Panshanger, April 2nd, 1837, MS.

them with a view to effect a compromise. He was not disposed to submit to either ; but in the latter case to "consider it the same as throwing it out, and to say we think this measure ought to pass of itself and upon its own merits, and that it is not dependent upon any other. However, there might be objections to this course, and it was impossible to determine more than the general principles of a line which ought to be taken in circumstances which it was impossible to foresee."

The defeat of Mr. Leader for Westminster, by Sir Francis Burdett, who had withdrawn his support from the Whigs on account of their alliance with Irish Liberals, was hailed by the Opposition as a renewed presage of ministerial change, and even Lord Tavistock was said to have thought that should it occur, and Sir R. Peel resume the reins of Government, he ought to have a fair trial. Yet most of the prophets prophesied falsely. Melbourne said he was not very sorry that Burdett had got in ; for that the Ultras were already hard to manage, and that if Leader had won, there would be no doing anything with them. Sir Francis was received on entering the House with exultation by the party whom he had long opposed ; and, carried away by the novelty of the situation, he denounced the acceptance by ministers of O'Connell's support as the "cant of patriotism." Lord John agreed with his old friend in his dislike of such a pretence, and then coolly added, "There is only one thing I dislike more, and that is the *re-cant* of patriotism."

It was sometimes not easy to keep peace between impetuous juniors and complacent seniors in office, whose jealousies were liable to be excited upon occasions, when the co-operation of two departments was indispensable. The President of the Board of Trade, who had been pushed by Althorp, and still more by himself, into a position of prominence he had hardly earned, was quick at work, and eager to display his ability in performing it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was amused at his airs of importance and pretensions to superior economical wisdom, took small pains to conceal that he thought him a bit of a coxcomb. Melbourne thought so too, but he had not quite forgotten the days of his own dandyism ; and having a pleasant knack at cutting anybody short who bored him, he contrived to keep his aspiring subordinate in an amicable temper towards himself, without allowing him to overbear the judgment of an older friend. Some difference having arisen regarding a set of minutes to be issued by the Board of Trade, an official letter of the Treasury commenting rather superciliously upon it, was sent to the First Lord for his sanction ; here is his private note to Spring-Rice on the subject :—

"Thomson has been with me this morning, very anxious and a little lively about these minutes. I think it will be best to have the matter out at once, therefore let me have them with your remarks, and I will talk to you again upon it, and consider how best to manage the affair."¹

¹ From South Street, May 13, 1837, MS.

He was much as ever at Holland House, where he delighted to talk over foreign politics with my Lord ; bygone beauties and forgotten fashions with my Lady ; etymologies with Bobus Smith ; and ecclesiastical controversies with Allen. To an idle man like Greville,¹ the variety of his reading was surprising. He would battle about the origin of an idiom, and quote Latin or English verse, without hitch or pause, to make good his point, reciting the chief passages with emphasis, and not unfrequently with gesticulation. Then he and his hostess would squabble about the true motive of what somebody was saying or doing ; both of them indulging in vivacity of caricature, and talk-etchings of personal traits, which nobody else would think of venturing on. Frequently he stayed for a night rather than incur the dreariness of the drive into town ; and then he had the enjoyment of discussing letters of importance next morning with his host, in whom, though he did not always agree with him, his affectionate confidence was unreserved.

The King had directed a Council to be summoned for the 30th of May ; it was proposed that but few of the Cabinet should attend. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was one of those who wished to be excused on account of other engagements. Melbourne expressed his regret that he had not known of it sooner, as he might have provided otherwise, but on the evening of the 29th it was too late :—

“We shall not be enough without you. I have a letter to-day to say the King is better, and has been improving through the day. He begs that those who come will suit their inclination about dining and sleeping there ; but I think that, as he is ill, we had better return. You will be back easily to dine with Northampton ; we lunch at three.”²

During the fortnight that ensued his Majesty grew daily worse ; and the physicians did not disguise their fear that the vital energies were rapidly giving way. On the 14th of June the First Minister, in a confidential note, reminded his colleague the Lord President that :—

“In case anything should happen suddenly, the House of Lords must assemble immediately ; and there must forthwith be a Privy Council. I have commands, as soon as the event happens, to attend immediately upon the Princess at Kensington, so that I must trouble you to go to the House of Lords, and take care that all is done as upon the last occasion. I have ascertained that it is wished that the Council should take place at Kensington.”³

“I have received a letter from Taylor, saying that the Queen is anxious that the recovery of the King should be prayed for in the churches, on Sunday next. I do not know whether the Council Office has anything to do with this. I will write to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is very doubtful whether the King will survive long, but the order may as well be given.”⁴

¹ ‘Journal.’

² From South Street, May 29th, 1837, MS.

³ To Lord Lansdowne.

⁴ June 15th, 1837.

On the evening of the same day he wrote :—

“The report this morning from Windsor is that there is a mitigation of the more painful symptoms, such as cough, difficulty of breathing ; and though there is no essential amendment, the King is more comfortable. I send you a sketch of what I propose the Princess should say to the Council, with Palmerston’s observations. Let me know what you think. John Russell suggests that it would be better and quieter altogether that the Council should be held at Kensington. I suppose there is no objection. I will try and ascertain the Princess’s feeling.”¹

A few days before the death of William IV., when his condition was understood to be hopeless, Sir Robert Peel is known to have expressed in private, but without reserve, his opinion that it was both expedient and right that the young Queen should retain Melbourne as her chief minister, and confide frankly in the loyalty of his counsel at the outset of her reign. The two preceding sovereigns had retained the ministers they had found in office at their accessions—precedents which public opinion approved.

The Duke of Wellington expressed a decided opinion, during the King’s illness, that the First Minister ought to be in communication with the heiress to the throne. When George IV. was dying, he had sent authentic intelligence every day to the Duke of Clarence ; and for many reasons of state, it was desirable that the Princess Victoria should be prepared for the event which at any hour might happen. Melbourne had already acted in accordance with this view ; and, without forestalling in any way the decision which the Sovereign expectant might form regarding those to whom she might eventually look for advice, he took care that the important contingency should in every respect be provided for in the most suitable manner. But with a true sense of delicacy, he scrupulously forbore from all appearance of endeavouring to ingratiate himself beforehand ; and as a matter of fact the Princess had never, upon any occasion, conversed with him on any subject of importance before her accession to the throne :—

“June 20th,

“Twenty minutes to 7 a.m.

“I have just received the intelligence of the death of the King, which took place at twelve minutes past two this morning.”²

¹ Idem.

² To Lord Lansdowne, June 20th, 1837, MS.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

QUEEN VICTORIA.

*Accession of the Queen—The Household—General election—Civil list
—Attacks of Brougham—Coronation.*

LORD CONYNGBAM left Windsor at daybreak on the morning of the 20th of June, bearing the tidings of her accession to the youthful Queen. Melbourne was soon after in attendance to explain the forms of the initiatory ceremonial and to submit the terms of the speech in which her Majesty was to assume the rights and dignities of empire. His first act on returning home was to communicate with Lord Lansdowne :—

“ I have seen the Queen ; nothing could be more proper and feeling than her behaviour. She declared her intention of keeping everything as it is, but has left all business until after the Council. One thing, however, she mentioned which I think it well to tell you of. She wishes Lady Lansdowne to be her principal lady. I told her there could not be a better choice, but that I very much feared that Lady Lansdowne would be unwilling to undertake it. I say nothing more from myself than that her doing so would be in the highest degree advantageous.”

“ P.S. Understanding that the Duke of Wellington put on deepest clothes upon the last occasion I have done so ; but I think nobody else need.”¹

The Privy Council assembled at Kensington at eleven o'clock ; the Princes of the Blood, the heads of the Church and the law, all the great officers of State and those who had preceded them in office. The Lord President, having announced the demise of the Crown, stated that it was their first duty formally to acquaint the new Sovereign with the fact ; and then to do homage and proclaim her Queen. The Dukes of Cumberland and Sussex, the two Archbishops, the Lord Chancellor, and the Premier quitted the Council Chamber and presented themselves to her Majesty, who received them alone. On their return the doors were opened, and the Queen, attired in simple mourning, advanced, and, bowing to those present, took her seat at the council board. The inaugural ceremonies were then proceeded with, according to the usages on such occasions, the Royal Princess being the first to swear obedience and kiss hands on bended knee. According to the rule observed on such occasions, the new Sovereign had in set form to declare who should be President of the reconstituted Privy Council. Mr. Greville had omitted to prepare the form in writing for her Majesty, under the impression that it was superfluous. His colleague, Mr. Bathurst, was of a different opinion ;

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, June 20th, 1837, MS.

and Lord Lansdowne, who was to be reappointed, insisted on the paper being duly inscribed with the words, "I declare," etc., and placed in the hands of the Queen.¹ He requested Spring Rice to look at the precedents, and draw the address to be presented the following day ; also the Royal answer to the condolence and congratulation.² In all the arrangements he was required to advise upon, regarding the formation of the Royal household, Melbourne appears to have taken counsel with the Lord President, in whose habits and ways of life splendid tastes were happily combined with dislike of ostentation.

It is very necessary that some of the situations in the Queen's household, such as some of her ladies and the Privy Purse, should be settled without further delay. It appears by Chamberlayne's 'Present State of England,' which is the only authority we can as yet find upon the subject, that Queen Anne had a Privy Purse, a Groom of the Stole, a First Lady of the Bedchamber, and ten other Ladies of the Bedchamber. The Queen thinks that such an establishment of ladies would at present be unnecessarily large, and she is disposed to think that the establishment of Queen Consort would be sufficient for her, viz.—one Mistress of the Robes, and six Ladies in Waiting. I told her what you desired me upon the part of Lady Lansdowne, and she was much gratified by it. If Lady Lansdowne thinks herself not equal in point of health to be the Mistress of the Robes, could she in the first instance take that of the First Lady in Waiting, with the understanding that she should be allowed to spare herself ; for instance some other lady might be got to take the waitings at the first drawing rooms.³

In the course of the afternoon the Marquis was thrown from his horse, and sustained a shock which for an hour or two occasioned some uneasiness ; he soon rallied, however, and next day was able to attend business as usual.

"I was very sorry to receive your note yesterday, and am anxious to hear that you are as well this morning as you expected that you should be. The shake which accompanies a fall from a horse is not always at our age so easily got rid of. I saw the Queen last night, and the arrangement which she seems to approve is, that if Lady Lansdowne will take the situation of First Lady in Waiting with the understanding that she is not to give any formal attendance, she would then appoint a Mistress of the Robes, a First Lady in Waiting and six other ladies for the ordinary duty. She is desirous that the Duchess of Sutherland should be the Mistress of the Robes if she will undertake it. Lady Tavistock will be one of her Ladies—Lady Rosebery, I am sorry to say, declines. If this arrangement will suit Lady Lansdowne I will write to the Duchess of Sutherland."⁴

"The Queen is desirous of knowing what arrangement is to be made

¹ Greville gives a different version of the incident, but the above is the correct one.

² Note from South Street, June 22nd, 1837, MS.

³ To Lord Lansdowne, June 22nd, 1837, MS.

⁴ June 23rd, 1837.

respecting money for her own immediate private expenses. I have requested her Majesty to consult you upon the subject, and I have sent you a letter which her Majesty has received from Messrs. Coutts.¹

The Duke of Kent and other members of the Royal family having honoured them by making them their bankers, Sir Coutts Trotter, in the name of the firm, respectfully desired to place their funds at the disposition of her Majesty, during the interval that must elapse before the arrangement of the new civil list should be made; and gave expression to the pride they would feel in being permitted to render any service to the Queen.

The ceremonials and changes incident to the accession being over, it was agreed on all hands that legislative business should as speedily as possible be brought to a close, questions in controversy being allowed to stand adjourned for the decision of the new Parliament. The Queen Dowager quitted Windsor a few days after the funeral of her Royal Consort, and his fair and youthful successor fixed her residence there early in July.

Just forty years before, when advocating a comprehensive policy of conciliation in Ireland, Fox had urged "that the whole people of that country ought to have the same privileges, the same system, the same operation of Government; and that all classes should have the same chances of emolument: in other words, that the Irish Government should be regulated by Irish notions and Irish prejudices; being convinced that the more Ireland was under Irish government, the more she would be bound to English interests." Melbourne and Holland had not forgotten the maxims they had learned in youth from the lips of their master—maxims which had been recently relied on as the best authority in legislative debate by his younger, but not less devoted disciple Lord J. Russell.² And now at last the time was come to act upon them.

One of the first administrative acts of the new reign was a letter publicly addressed by the Home Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, commending the spirit in which he had theretofore conducted the Government, and, by command of the Queen, making known her earnest desire "to see her Irish subjects in the full enjoyment of that civil and political equality, to which, by a recent statute, they were entitled; and that she was convinced, that when invidious distinctions were altogether obliterated, her throne would be more secure, and her people more truly united."

A rumour had been for some days in circulation that Baron Stockmar, well known as the confidential friend of Prince Leopold in this country, was appointed private secretary to the Queen. Writing confidentially to a colleague Melbourne observed, "There is, of course, no truth in Stockmar's appointment. It should be quietly contradicted."³

¹ From South Street, June 24th, 1837, to T. S. Rice, MS.

² Hansard, Irish Municipal Bill, February 7th, 1837.

³ From Windsor Castle, August 31st, 1837, MS.

It was indeed one of the difficulties of the situation that no one could be named who seemed in all respects eligible for an office at once so peculiar and so responsible. The names of more than one individual well connected and of high attainments were suggested, but for various reasons they were all in turn laid aside, and Melbourne himself undertook for a time to perform that portion of the duties of private secretary to the Sovereign which related to public affairs. No person in the realm possessed in so high a degree the combination of experience, tact, and discretion that were requisite for such a post; and his readiness and assiduity in adding his labours to those incidental to the first office in the State, earned for him the highest praise from the illustrious personage for whose sake he undertook their performance.¹ The Duke of Wellington's testimony on this subject cannot be omitted here :—

"I am willing to admit that the noble Viscount has rendered the greatest possible service to her Majesty. I happen to know that it is her Majesty's opinion that the noble Viscount has rendered her Majesty the greatest possible service, making her acquainted with the mode and policy of the Government of this country, initiating her into the laws and spirit of the constitution, independently of the performance of his duty as the servant of her Majesty's crown; teaching her, in short, to preside over the destinies of this great country."²

Towards the end of August, the King and Queen of the Belgians were expected at Windsor, and her Majesty desired that Lord and Lady Lansdowne should be of the guests invited to meet them. But royal wishes were expressed with gentle consideration for their late bereavement in the loss of their eldest son :—

"The Queen fears very much such an invitation should annoy and derange, especially in a moment of domestic affliction. I have therefore undertaken to ascertain your feelings upon the subject. If Lady Lansdowne should feel herself equal to the exertion, or if you should be willing to come alone, it will give great pleasure. If not, let it be considered that nothing has passed upon the subject."³

"The Queen is much pleased that you and Lady Lansdowne will come to Windsor. She does not wish to constrain you at all, but, if not inconvenient, would wish you to stay from Tuesday the 29th, until the following Tuesday. You give a very true account of the state of the country, and also of the state of feeling in it. The differences, I am afraid, are not the less violent because there is little to differ about.

¹ A fragment of one of Melbourne's letters, written in unguarded confidence to a colleague, under circumstances wholly exceptional, has been supposed to indicate his conviction that the Sovereign, on constitutional grounds, ought to be denied the advantage of a private secretary. Were the supposition credible, it would be dispelled by the fact that a few months later the minister himself recommended for that function the late Mr. Anson, as one who, though come of a good Whig stock, had never been entangled in party politics, and who proved himself, by temper, assiduity, and discretion, eminently fitted for the post he filled till his death.

² Speech in the House of Lords, August 24th, 1841.

³ From Downing Street, August 27th, MS.

I am afraid there is little hope of Sefton's recovery. He may rally, but from what Copeland tells me I much fear that the probability is the other way."¹

During his absence from town, Lord Palmerston resolved to send a friendly force to Oporto; and the case being urgent he obtained the consent for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide the necessary funds, without waiting to consult the Cabinet. From Brocket Melbourne signified his entire approval of what had been done, adding that "he had long been dreadfully uneasy about Portugal."²

A project was prepared at the Treasury, upon the accession of the Queen, for the reform and better management of the Crown estates in Lancashire and Cornwall. A number of old abuses would thereby have been got rid of, and a certain saving effected for the benefit of the Exchequer. To the logic and arithmetic of the plan no exceptions could be taken; but the Premier hesitated upon other grounds:—

The question of the Duchies is a very material one, and one of great delicacy, and which appears to me to require to be treated with much caution. It is very material in itself, and as far as it relates to the administration of the property. Wherever you meddle with these ancient rights and jurisdictions, it appears to me that, for the sake of remedying a few comparatively insignificant abuses," you create many new inconveniences, and always produce considerable discontent. But the general question appears to me still more important when considered with reference to the present House of Commons, and the tone and temper of the elections. It is confessed upon all hands that by the Church-rate measure we have raised against ourselves a strong and effectual Church cry. Let us take care that we do not add a prerogative cry. The Church alone is nearly too much for us; Church and Crown would be so at once, and if this tone should be taken we shall give the House of Commons an easy opportunity of acting at once against us. The progress of public opinion, and the anxiety for economy and reform, furnish no safeguard against this. Public opinion does make a progress, but it is not by a steady onward course. It is like the tide, it comes on with great violence and then recedes as violently in an opposite direction. It gains ground perhaps with every wave, but it is far from always keeping the ground which it temporarily occupies. The fault of our Church-rate measure was that the grievance to be removed was one almost entirely of principle. It was in very few places a real burthen. The same is still more true of the Duchies: few except their inhabitants know of their existence, and none feel any inconvenience from them, or would receive any benefit from their reformation."³

His stay at Windsor was necessarily continued during the autumn, and his interchange of views with members of the Cabinet remaining in town, was more frequently than heretofore in writing. A note from

¹ August 21st, 1837.

² From Brocket, August 24th, 1837, MS.

³ From Windsor Castle, August 30th, 1837, MS.

Lady Holland, having mentioned incidentally that Spring Rice expected him next day in London, he wrote to say he had no intention of coming up yet :—

"The Queen told me to-day that she expected you to come down before going to Ireland ; if you do, we can have our conversation here as well as in London."¹

The result of the general election was unfavourable to ministers in England, but in Scotland their friends were almost everywhere successful : and in Ireland, out of 105, forty-three Protestants and twenty-nine Catholics, forgetful of past differences, were cordially ministerial. In the new Parliament the Treasury whip felt secure of a good working majority on party questions. Mr. Abercromby, being re-elected for Edinburgh, was regarded as certain to be again chosen Speaker ; but as an act of courtesy to the Leader of Opposition, Lord J. Russell wrote acquainting him with the ministerial intention, and inquiring if any rival candidate were likely to be named. Sir Robert Peel replied that on the last occasion he had not been allowed to replace Mr. Mannors Sutton in the chair ; and that consequently he did not feel called upon to answer the question. The Home Secretary inclosed his note without any comment to the Premier, who returned it with the minute, "Peel is a bad horse to go up to in the stable." A letter of O'Connell's from Derrynane to the people of Ireland abounded in expressions of devotion to the youthful Queen and praise of the Administration, whose conduct of Irish affairs was contrasted invidiously with that of Earl Grey. Melbourne was not so dazzled with the novelty of his new position as Premier by the confidence of the Commons, and the choice of the Crown, as to misread the tendency of such laudation. He knew the value of O'Connell's support, but he could not forget what it cost. And speaking without reserve to one whom he could implicitly trust he said, "His love is only less injurious than his enmity. Such letters from him do us harm in England, I know not whether they do us good in Ireland. Strong as we are, we are not so superdamnable strong as to insult Grey, Anglesey and Stanley, as he does in one and the same paragraph." Nor was he unforesightful of the effect likely to be produced by the disclosure he knew to be impending of a serious falling off in the receipt of the Excise and Customs consequent upon the recent shocks to commercial credit and the diminished employment of labour :—

"The time is not far off," he wrote the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "when the state of the revenue will be declared. I think every fair means should be taken to counteract the apprehensions which will be produced by the amount of defalcations which will appear on the face of the account. You have, of course, not omitted this from your consideration, but I think it as well to mention it. There should be no deceit nor concealment, but what can be, should be accounted for."²

¹ From Windsor Castle, September 2nd, 1837.

² From Windsor Castle, September 10th, 1837, MS.

Some days later he observed :—

“I do not fear the impression of the announcement of the quarter's revenue upon the minds of any who have the least information or understanding of the subject, but these are very few indeed. Very few look to the account of the whole year, and the generality consider the relative deficiency of the quarter as an absolute deficiency as compared with the charge. A little popular and common explanation is, therefore, I think, useful. I always think that we are too much inclined to consider the Bank. We hold them to be an independent trading company, bound to take care of their own interests without reference to the Government, and there is great use and advantage in this arrangement. But then we must expect them to act in this capacity, and I do not see, except in confidence, that they are bound to make the Government acquainted with their intentions and operations. As bankers they will be anxious to do as much business as they can, and it will, of course, diminish their own trade, if they suffer others to discount at a lower rate. Their mismanaging their own affairs is a contingency that may happen, and of which we must suffer the consequences.”¹

Lord J. Russell and Spring Rice equally sought to impress their colleagues with the conviction that no more time should be suffered to elapse without attempting the introduction of a legal provision for the poor in Ireland. They differed in their views of the mode in which this should be done, the former setting a high value on the political advantage of using the opportunity to establish identical institutions in the two countries, the latter believing that their social plight and need admitted not practically of such identification. About the right and duty of laying the permanent burthen of relief upon the owners of real property there was a general concurrence of opinion. Even in Ireland, few persons of influence or judgment gave heed to O'Connell's objections, which were rather sentimental than sustainable in argument. But philanthropic feeling and territorial fear combined in deprecating the attempt to deal with the surplus population, who had been suffered to multiply and grow more miserable for generations, by the application of the method enforced with so much difficulty even in opulent England, under the recent Poor Law Amendment Act. The country, it was said, must be studded all over with workhouses at an enormous cost, if the destitute were to be provided with in-door relief during half the year. The charge for such establishments would prove a crushing weight on industry and enterprise, already too depressed ; and the reproductive employment of labour in better tillage and further reclamation of the soil would be retarded instead of being stimulated. The helpless through orphanhood, sickness, or age were universally admitted to have an indefeasible claim to relief ; but, if the right of the able-bodied out of employment were legally admitted, what would become of rents and

¹ From Windsor Castle, September 21st, 1837, MS.

profits? The section of economists led by Colonel Torrens advocated systematic emigration in preference to either parochial employment or imprisonment. But Canada was still disquieted by colonial disaffection, Australia was, in popular imagination, but a land of convicts, and New Zealand was still but the hunting-ground of the Maori race. If anything was to be accomplished towards putting an end to the reproach of perennial destitution, a poor law of one sort or another must be tried. Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Cornewall Lewis, who had been engaged in the exhaustive inquiry into the condition of the Irish poor in 1834, suggested that one of the permanent English commissioners who then sat at Somerset House to administer the New Poor Law, should be sent to Ireland to judge and advise what should be the form of the contemplated experiment, and to estimate its necessary cost. To this Melbourne agreed, though not without misgivings as to the foregone conclusions and possible errors of bureaucratic dogmatism. Mr. Nicholls, having finished his bird's-eye glance at Irish polity, returned full of confidence that he had mastered the whole nature of the disease, and could prescribe unerringly an adequate cure. His memorable report—memorable, as was afterwards bitterly said, in the sense that it would be well if it could be utterly forgotten—won the approval of his colleagues in the Poor Law Commission; and Mr. Lewis having been asked to give his opinion confidentially upon its proposals, furnished the Home Secretary with a summary of arguments in its favour so cogent and plausible that Lord J. Russell desired to have them submitted to the Lord President with a view to the preparation of a bill in the ensuing Session. Aware of the strength of the objections which, irrespective of class and party were entertained to the project, and by none more deeply than by influential members of the Cabinet, it was suggested that it should be legislatively dealt with as an experiment for five years only. In transmitting Mr. Nicholls' recommendations, Melbourne observed:—

“That though in order to facilitate passing a bill through Parliament it is often necessary to make it temporary, if the bill be in the main good, this is a very bad arrangement. It brings the matter under the reconsideration of Parliament, perhaps at a very inconvenient moment; it is far better to make the Act permanent and amend it.”¹

The counter-scheme of Archbishop Whately and the Chief Remembrancer Blake did not commend itself as sufficiently practical and unobjectionable to his mind; and with many a shrug and sigh and exclamation of wonder, that Lansdowne and Rice, who ought to know what should be done, did not offer anything better, he assented in Cabinet to the strange scheme of cutting up Ireland into eighty unions, and setting up in each an expensive machinery for the useless employment of waste labour.

¹ From Windsor Castle, September 28th, 1837, MS.

Many letters at this period relate to the details of the Civil List, which the new Parliament would be asked to vote on its re-assembling. The First Lord of the Treasury sifted every detail thoroughly of the expenditure in former reigns, and weighed for himself the comparative circumstances in past and present times, which required or justified deviation from precedent. Lord Spencer, who was consulted on the subject as the highest economic authority among the Whigs, wrote unreservedly recommending that the new establishment should be formed on a generous and ungrudging scale. Engaged himself in applying principles almost of parsimony to the retrieving of his family estates from embarrassment, he saw the political wisdom of leading the nation to confide at the outset of the new reign in their youthful Sovereign, and the policy as well as propriety of providing such an income as would take away all excuse in future for the contracting of royal debt. Fortified by such authority, and completely master of the history of the subject, Melbourne made up his mind to propose to Parliament a provision for her Majesty considerably larger than that which had been agreed to in the previous reign. And he prayed Spring Rice when the Cabinet met in November, to "come prepared to act boldly and liberally, and by no means to fiddle upon small points, and about petty salaries,"¹ and so it was done accordingly. The ultra economists railed at the extravagance, pointed to the prevalent distress, and asked why was this waste, and wherefore the money was not given to the poor. Spring Rice had to endure the brunt and bear the blame. And unluckily for him, he had a plucky but imprudent way of smiling provokingly at taunts he felt to be unjust; and what he used to call turning the tables upon his accusers by showing up some inconsistency of theirs. But this mode of warfare with deputations to the Treasury or opponents in committee of supply, however amusing to lookers on, does not pay. In the long run the pugnacious minister gets the worst of it. His hard hits may be laughed at and cheered at the time; but they accumulate at last until his influence is stoned with stones till it dies.

Far removed from the stir and din of public life, the career of the minister had anxiously been watched, and his success affectionately triumphed in, by the last of those who could recall the days when he was the favourite child of Melbourne House. The aged Lord of Petworth had survived nearly all who in the days of Conway, Reynolds, and Horace Walpole, had mingled in the festive throng. Like many who then were Whigs, he had become Conservative; and at times he would gravely banter William (as to the end he loved to call him) on his flirtations with Radicalism. But his interest never flagged in the political changes in which he was concerned. Melbourne was seldom long without paying him a visit; and never ceased to delight in his original and suggestive conversation. When Lord Egremont believed his end approaching, he sent for him. He was in full possession of

¹ From Brighton, October 21st, 1837, MS.

his faculties, and talked, as if done with life, of the condition of the country, and what he deemed the tendency of things. Looking at the timepiece, he said :—

“William, I have lived long enough to see the hand go round. In the first quarter of my time the world was nothing but profligate ; in the next there came a great revival of puritanism ; then came another spell of luxury and licence ; and now you have a revival, of religion once more.”

He was always much delighted with Melbourne's success and troubled himself little about difference of politics ; “his only blunder that he could never understand was his mad choice of a wife.” “I always thought he had better judgment and taste.” But as he wrote who knew her best : “though her countenance had no other beauty than expression, that charm it possessed in a singular degree. Her manners, though eccentric, and apparently not really affected, had a fascination which it is difficult for any who never encountered their effect to conceive. Her ordinary conversation was playful and animated, pregnant with humour and vivacity, and remarkable for the common sense of the opinions it expressed. She was indeed wiser for others than for herself, and she who disdained all worldly advice was the most judicious of worldly advisers.” Lord Egremont died on the 11th of November in his 85th year.

Some time before Parliament met the Duke of Sussex wrote, offering to move the Address in the Peers : whereon Melbourne observed : “As he offers it is difficult if not impossible to decline, and though I perceive some objections, they are not of very great importance. What do you think ? The Duke is very anxious that this should be kept quite secret at present.”¹ The Queen's uncle had, after all, a stronger claim than most of the ministerial peers to have his wishes considered. He had been through life more constant than any of his brothers, except the Duke of Kent, in fidelity to the principles of civil and religious liberty ; and his speech on the first day of the Session was judiciously conceived, and very well delivered.

Brougham still sat on the ministerial side. In a splenetic speech, he denounced as extravagant the grant of thirty thousand a year to the Duchess of Kent, whom, by a strange inaccuracy, he designated as the “Queen-Mother.” Melbourne corrected him by interjecting the “Mother of the Queen.” Stung at being caught in a blunder, and glad of an excuse for assailing his courtly foe, Brougham fiercely rejoined :—

“I admit my noble friend is right. On a point of this sort I humble myself before my noble friend. I have no courtier-like cultivation. I am rude of speech. The tongue of my noble friend is so well hung, and so well attuned to courtly airs, that I cannot compete with him for the prize which he is now so eagerly struggling to win. Not being given to glozing and flattery, I may say that the Duchess of Kent

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, from Windsor Castle, September 28th, 1837, MS.

(whether to be called queen-mother or mother of the queen) is nearly connected with the throne ; and a plain man like myself, having no motive but to do my duty, may be permitted to surmise that any additional provision for her might possibly come from the Civil List, which you have so lavishly voted."

The Premier repelled this attack by reminding the House of a not unimportant difference between the Queen-Dowager and a Princess who had never worn the Crown. What was meant by attributing to him a tongue well hung he could not tell ; but one more skilful in egregious flattery than that of the noble and learned Lord he had never known.

Out of the Privy purse Melbourne made up his mind, after much consideration, to recommend her Majesty to grant to the members of the family of Fitz Clarence the same allowances which they had enjoyed during the lifetime of their father. It would, he said, "be kind, it would be generous, and it would be conclusive. No further demand could be made after the Queen had given them as much as the late King."¹

Christmas brought no holiday time. Lansdowne, who had gone to Bowood, advised by letter certain measures with respect to Canada in conformity with the conciliatory assurances in the Maiden Speech from the Throne ; and these were laid before a meeting of the Cabinet on the 26th of December. Other views were, however, strongly pressed, and Melbourne wrote reluctantly urging the return of his friend to town.²

A profound feeling of personal respect for the illustrious commander who led the Opposition in the Lords, combined with a sense of the supreme value to be attached to his opinions on all questions connected with the army, led him often to consult the Duke while measures were under consideration ; and he never failed to do so in the most deferential and persuasive terms.

"MY LORD DUKE,—I beg leave to submit to your Grace a copy of a proposed order in Council, which has been drawn up for the purpose of carrying into effect some of the most material of the recommendations of the report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the civil administration of the Army. Notwithstanding the benefit which must be derived from your Grace's long experience, and great authority upon this subject, I should not have ventured to take this liberty if I had not felt assured of your Grace's anxiety upon all occasions to afford to the Government of the country all the information and assistance in your power. Neither should I have done this if the matter had not been as yet pending and undecided, nor if I had been able to find in your Grace's evidence given before the commissioners, any distinct opinion given upon the parts which are the subject of this proposed order. Lord Hill has put me in possession of your Grace's

¹ From South Street, December 5th, 1837, MS.

² From Downing Street, December 26th, 1837, and January 1st, 1838.

memorandum upon this report, but perhaps, considering the importance of the subject, your Grace may be desirous of another, explaining, enforcing and adding to the opinions which are expressed in that paper.—I have the honour, etc.”¹

The Duke replied on the 4th, courteously and frankly stating his general views, and where he thought the minute might be modified with advantage.

The Premier wrote again to the Duke informing him some days beforehand “that it was the intention to proceed in both Houses by Address on the papers already presented regarding Canada. Lord John would move the Address in the House of Commons on the Tuesday following, having given notice to that effect, and Lord Glenelg would on the same day make a general statement in the House of Lords, and give notice of moving the address on Thursday.”²

Sheil, notwithstanding his brilliant successes in debate, remained without any acknowledgment of his services until January, when the commissionership of Greenwich Hospital became vacant. It was supposed to be a permanent office of £600 a year with a retiring pension of half that sum. The Premier sent for him and asked him if he would accept it. “If the holder be irremovable, I am willing to do so,” said the orator, “though certainly the emolument is not splendid.” Melbourne rejoined with a laugh that for life £600 a year was not a bad thing; and that he had known more than one man of repute in Parliament who contrived to live on a good deal less. When Parliament met in February a new writ was issued for Tipperary, and Sheil was re-elected without opposition. But doubts having been raised as to whether an office whose acceptance vacated the seat could be considered permanent, Sir Robert Peel intimated in the House that should a change of ministry occur he did not think that it would be so regarded.

Brougham no longer lingered in Westmoreland as during the Session of 1836, nor as in 1837 observed an armed neutrality in public affairs. Meanwhile, Lyndhurst and he had been reconciled, and remained ever after on friendly and even intimate terms. Towards many of his old allies he continued to profess unaltered sentiments of regard; but to Melbourne there was nothing due or to be given but condign punishment for what he called his treachery; one aggravation of offence not to be forgiven lay, as he loved to tell, in the Premier’s having written to him about the Imprisonment for Debt Bill and other measures, in his accustomed free and easy tone, without dropping the least hint of the judicial affront in contemplation. Had he been treated confidentially and told that the whole blame lay with the King, he would have pitied the infirmity of friendship, but would not have felt himself outwitted. But on the demise of the Crown and the accession of Melbourne to the hitherto untasted power

¹ From Downing Street, January 1st, 1838.

² From Downing Street, January 13th, 1838, MS.

which the full confidence of royalty confers, the last shade of doubtful extenuation vanished, and the unhappy egotist was forced to see plainly that he had been laid aside by his party rather than by royalty. Thenceforth his thoughts were devoted to the vindication of his rejected claims and vengeance on his chief adversary. The public were never told directly at the time what were the reasons that he was not a second time made Keeper of the Seal; and other causes which appeared to be too obvious were never authentically denied. He was held up as a victim to the enmity and resentment of the Court; and sometimes as the hated and envied rival whom the Whigs of inferior talent feared to admit once more within the pale of power. But on the fall of Sir Robert Peel's short Administration, the Court was absolutely helpless; while the new Cabinet stood in the utmost need of some one able to cope with Lord Lyndhurst; yet for several months there was no one whom they ventured to name as a fit occupant of the Woolsack. Now they could no longer deceive themselves into hoping for any quarter from the eloquent and exasperated subject of official ostracism. Furious at the conspicuous slight put upon him, Brougham lost no more time in reminding them what manner of spirit he was of. Day after day he poured forth upon them the unfailing vials of his wrath. Ireland, Canada, and the West Indies furnished him in succession with themes of invective against what he stigmatised as their maladministration; while, for popularity in England, he was ready to outbid them easily on education, free trade, and law reform. Had the objections to his readmission to the Cabinet rested on the antipathy of the King, they would have been removed by his demise in 1837; had they been entertained only by the Premier they must evidently have been overborne by the more placable views of his colleagues, as time wore on, and the ministerial majority, small enough at first, grew less and less. The truth is, however, that what their chief had the courage and candour to declare at starting, they were, or soon came to be convinced of with regard to this most eccentric though most eloquent of men. To one of his memorable onslaughts, Melbourne thus commenced his reply:—

“I appeal to the candour of every one who has listened to the marvellous display of ingenuity in argument and versatility of illustration, with which we have been favoured by the noble and learned Lord, whether the reasons must not have been perfectly insuperable which compelled us to forego the advantage of including him in the Administration.”

Melbourne invited the Duke of Wellington to occupy the first place in the Commission to inquire into Army promotion. His reply is characteristic:—

“MY LORD,—I have received your letter of last night. I am very unwilling to decline to give my assistance in the proposed inquiry. But it is a very serious affair to undertake, without knowing who are to be the members of the Commission. I request you to let me know

the names of the officers and gentlemen whose nomination is in contemplation."¹

The Premier was so fortunate as to be able soon afterwards to send a reply which was deemed satisfactory :—

"MY LORD DUKE,—I beg leave to transmit to your Grace a list of the proposed members of the Commission upon naval and military promotion. I believe they have all been already named to your Grace, except Sir Richard Williams. I have received the assent of them all, except Sir H. Vivian and Sir A. Dickson, the former of whom is at a distance in the country. As soon as I receive the replies of these gentlemen, I shall direct the Commission to be made out for her Majesty's signature.²—I remain, my Lord Duke, your Grace's faithful and obedient servant, etc."

Two days after the unwearied man of all public work rejoined :—

"MY LORD,—I have had the honour of receiving your letter of the 19th. I shall be prepared to attend whenever your Lordship proposes that the intended Commission should commence its inquiry. I heard from Lord Melville that he will be in town early in May. It is desirable that the Commissioners should sit, so as to consider the matter referred to them, during his Lordship's stay in London."³

Besides those already named, the Commission consisted of the Duke of Richmond, Earl of Minto, Lord Hill, Viscount Howick, Mr. Labouchere, Sir Charles Adam, Sir James Kempt, Sir T. M. Hardy, Sir George Cockburn, and Sir Henry Hardinge. Then followed a note from the minister, saying, that he had acted on the suggestion for an early meeting of the Commission, and had named Mr. Colling, of the War Office, Secretary.⁴

With good taste, and true tact, everything like complincent or favour is omitted in this correspondence. It was a great object with the minister to get the Duke to act ; but he understood the man, and felt that he would be all the more gratified at being asked respectfully, on public grounds alone, and as being above the notion of taking trouble to put an obligation on political opponents. On his own side Melbourne was scrupulous to keep clear of all such obligation ; but he did not feel it to be any compromise of the dignity of his office to tell the great soldier by implication, that in taking thought for defence of the realm, his counsel was indispensable. How indispensable the Duke considered himself in matters of a different kind, may be seen by a note, meant to be friendly, which he sent to the minister, very soon afterwards :—

"I am very sorry to inform you that I am unable to attend the discussion of the second reading of the Irish Poor Bill, this day. In truth, I am at present so deaf as to be unable to hear anything. I recommend to you to postpone the second reading to some future day.

¹ From Apsley House, March 15th, 1838, MS.

² From Windsor Castle, April 19th, 1838, MS.

³ From Strathfieldsaye, April 21st, 1838, MS.

⁴ From South Street, April 29th, 1838.

I don't think that the House in general will like to agree to allow the second reading of the bill *pro formâ*, and postpone the discussion to a future stage. You will have a discussion, therefore, if not a serious opposition upon the second reading, if not postponed, and further upon a future day, and your difficulties in passing the bill will be increased." ¹

Both sides were weary of the struggle about the payment of Irish tithes. The duty of the reappropriation of church property by Parliament had been the watchword of liberalism in 1835, and was still reiterated as a point of honour. But of its successful assertion in legislative enactment, no longer any hope remained ; and if without actual renunciation its adjournment *sine die* would secure municipal franchises and rights for the remaining third of the realm still kept waiting for them, would not the concession be well worth making ? Several intimations on the other hand had been thrown out by persons of weight in Opposition, that some compromise of the kind would not be refused. It took many conferences and much correspondence to bring Government and their supporters generally to agree to the sacrifice of feeling involved ; but the continued loss and injury inflicted by the prolongation of the tithe war on the farming classes throughout three provinces of Ireland overbore party scruples : and, without objection, save from a handful of English Radicals, who were all for abiding by the fruitless theory, regardless of suffering, which they or their constituents did not feel, a bill was brought in by Lord Morpeth, providing for the conversion of tithes into a rent charge upon the first estate of inheritance, giving to the landowners an abatement of twenty-seven and a half per cent. No sooner, however, had the party flag been lowered, than an attempt was made to seize and bear it off in triumph. On the 14th of May Sir Thomas Acland moved a declaratory resolution negating in terms the right of Parliament to alienate to secular purposes any portion of church property. Lord John at once declared that this was a humiliation to which he would not as a minister submit. He had been duped by the professions of his antagonist, he said, into omitting the appropriation clause in the pending bill. Ministers would not retract what they had done, but thenceforth he should doubt the sincerity of all professions of desire for peace, and "treat their declarations as stratagems intended to deceive : " and the motion was rejected. Melbourne did not disguise a like indignation at having been outmanœuvred ; but he did not ascribe to the whole body of his adversaries an intention to mislead ; and, while he sympathised in the feeling of his colleague, he knew that words of scorn were not likely to propitiate his antagonists in the Upper House, some of whom had in private helped to lead him into the expectation that both the troublesome questions at issue might be brought to an amicable conclusion.

Lord Fitzgerald induced the Lords to adopt an amendment which

¹ From Apsley House, May 14th, 1838, MS.

if it were sent down to the Commons, was certain to be rejected, as involving an infringement of the special functions of the Lower House. Both parties, though for opposite reasons, wished for an end of the controversy, and both consequently desired that the measure should pass. Melbourne accordingly wrote confidentially :—

“I have had communication myself with the Speaker, and also with others, and I can assure you that if the Lords’ amendment in the Tithe Bill is insisted upon, the bill will certainly be lost. The Speaker will do no more than state from the chair that the amendment is contrary to the privileges of the House, and inadmissible, and there will be at once a general acquiescence in the rejection of the measure, which is of itself no great favourite.”¹

This note was forthwith transmitted to the Duke of Wellington, without whose assent the amendment could not be withdrawn. Lyndhurst was consulted, and though the point of privilege was said to be debateable, all agreed that, under the circumstances, it would not be wise to raise it, and without the controverted alteration the Tithes Bill became law, and agitation on the subject was not renewed for thirty years. But Sir R. Peel thought he sufficiently met the implied claim for countervailing concession, by not repeating the proposal to abolish Corporations altogether; while he endeavoured to satisfy the sectarian views of his party, by various restrictions of municipal power, and by fixing the civic franchise at £10 rated value. The Lords, by Lyndhurst’s advice, adopted these limitations; and the Commons thereupon threw out the bill.

The first opportunity which had occurred since Melbourne became Premier of making O’Connell a suitable judicial offer, seemed to have arisen on the death of Chief Baron Joy. His appointment to the first seat in the Irish Court of Exchequer would hardly be agreeable in some respects to him; and it would inevitably give rise to a fresh storm of attack upon the Government, founded on the conspicuous part he had borne in contesting writs of rebellion, which were solely cognisable in that particular Court. By a different arrangement, however, a situation, equally honourable and lucrative might be placed at his option. Mulgrave, then in London, was consequently instructed to communicate confidentially with the Master of the Rolls, who, it was hoped, would not object to become Chief Baron, leaving thereby the Second Seat in Equity at the disposal of Government. Accordingly, the Lord Lieutenant wrote to Sir Michael O’Loghlen :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am about to write to you in strict confidence, on a subject which I think was touched upon between us at the time I had the pleasure of conferring upon you the Rolls, namely, the possibility of its being the office of all others (should an opportunity occur) we should be most desirous of offering to O’Connell, and your own disposition to do all you can to facilitate the arrangement, by accepting some equivalent appointment. You will understand that there

¹ Downing Street, August 8th, 1838, MS.

has as yet been no decision taken as to any offer to be made to him ; but I myself feel all its advantages, whether it should be accepted or not. And you will perceive that there are many reasons why, from the present nature of business in the Court, it would be impossible to make him Chief Baron, whilst that post would offer a much larger field for distinction to a person of your energy and activity. I must, therefore, learn from you whether I am right in conjecturing from what passed previously between us, that I may tell Lord Melbourne that you would be an obstacle to such an arrangement. I should be happy to recommend its being accompanied with a baronetcy, that the store we place upon your reputation and services might be more obvious.

“Yours faithfully,

“MULGRAVE.”¹

O'Loughlen replied, without hesitation or reserve, that his feelings in accepting his office had been correctly understood at the time, and that they were wholly unchanged. He had no desire for a seat in a Court of Common Law, but he was ready to resign the Rolls unconditionally, if there was any probability that O'Connell would take his place. He sought to make no terms of any sort ; and, in point of fact, entertained the idea of returning to practice at the Bar, as Sir E. Sugden was said to have intended doing, after his brief tenure of the Great Seal of Ireland, not long before. But of this he dropped no hint in his reply. Some days after its receipt Mulgrave wrote to him again :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—Nothing certainly could be more handsome, and at the same time fair and candid, than your answer to my confidential inquiry. I felt, in common with the Government, that it was of such importance that, upon this occasion, Mr. O'Connell should have an offer of some post in which we thought he might be beneficially placed, that, considering myself authorized by your letter, I sent for him and told him that whilst many reasons obviously prevented my proposing for his acceptance the actual vacancy in the Exchequer, I believed I could, for such an object, procure an exchange which would place at my disposal the Rolls. At the same time I thought it right to accompany this with the notification that, though you would kindly assent, I knew it would not be agreeable to you. He appeared very much pleased with the offer, but on other grounds gracefully declined it. I have no doubt that you have thus given us an opportunity of removing from his mind a disagreeable impression of exclusion, and I think the effect will be generally beneficial. I have now the pleasure of announcing to you that Lord Melbourne has cheerfully acceded to my recommendation of conferring on you the dignity of a baronet at the coming coronation, as a mark of the sense entertained of your public services during the period of my administration.—Believe, etc.”²

¹ From Eaton Place, June 11th, 1838.

² From Eaton Place, June 18th, 1838, MS.

O'Loghlen retained his office till his death, and Woulffe was made Chief Baron.

Throughout a long official career, in which he had enjoyed for the most part the especial confidence of the Crown, Melbourne neither sought nor would accept any personal favour or distinction. Without a son to inherit his name, ill-nature said he had no motive for desiring advancement to a higher grade in the peerage; and would fain ascribe his refusal of decorations, so much coveted, to the supreme vanity that sought its gratification in conferring honours upon men higher born than himself. His letters and familiar talk betrayed no such emotions. As a rule he generally would have dissuaded any one he really liked from seeking a step in the peerage. He loved to tell the story of a certain earl whom Lord Cornwallis laughed at for wishing a marquise:—"I have no son and he has several, but if I had I should remember that after such a promotion, John and Tom could no longer afford to go to town on the top of the coach." Previous to the Coronation when many were asking favours, an old friend wrote to say that he would call on him to explain what he desired to have as a recognition of long fidelity. He happened to be the fourth who had come on similar business the same morning, and the minister's patience being rather exhausted, he said quickly, "Well, what can I do for you?" Fearing to let the opportunity slip, the anxious visitor muttered, "I don't very much care about it myself, but my lady wishes that I should be a marquise." Melbourne, who knew that he was not rich, opened his eyes and said, "Why, you are not such a fool as that, are you?" On another occasion, an importunate member of the party, whom he had once described as a fellow who was "asking for everything and fit for nothing," intimated that he had a new request to make, for reasons he wanted an interview to explain. The weary dispenser of patronage showed his note to Anson, saying, "What the devil would he have now? does he want a garter for the other leg?"

With respect to creating peerages he wrote:—"I think it absolutely necessary not to vacate counties or towns at the present moment. I would, therefore, boldly lay down as a rule founded upon the necessity of the circumstances, that we should make few members of the House of Commons. It follows from this that we must have a very limited creation, as it must be understood that the claims of those who are in Parliament will be considered hereafter. I propose, therefore, to make only eight; English—Hanbury Tracy, William Ponsonby, Sir John Wrottesley, Paul Methuen; Irish—Lismore, Rossmore, Carew; Scotch—Kintore. I think if we adhere strictly to this we can stand upon it and shall produce the least dissatisfaction, which is all that can be expected. The only promotions—Mulgrave to be a marquis, and Dundas to be an earl. I am very desirous that the whole should be limited, as these large creations at coronations are, I believe, quite unprecedented, and date no farther back than the coronation of George IV., who was overwhelmed with promises. If no members of Parliament are made, the whole may be discontented, but no particu-

lar person can be. I hope that you may think this the safest course that can be pursued in a difficult conjuncture. I send you John Russell's view of it, which is very much mine. All the Scotch agree that Kintore is the only Scotch peer we have who has fortune for it."¹

"I have this morning received Lord Queensberry's resignation of the Lieutenancy of the County of Dumfries upon the ground of Lord Kintore being made a peer whilst he is passed over."²

Leslie, in his recollections of the coronation, says, that, next to the Field-Marshal Duke, the most remarkable man in the scene was the First Lord of the Treasury.

"I had seen him for the first time, years before, in Murray's drawing-room, at Albemarle Street. At a later period I saw much of him at Holland House. His head was a truly noble one; I think, indeed, he was the finest specimen of manly beauty in the meridian of life I ever saw; not only were his features eminently handsome, but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual. His laugh was frequent, and the most joyous possible, and his voice so deep and musical, that to hear him say the most ordinary things was a pleasure; but his frankness, his freedom from affectation, and his peculiar humour, rendered almost everything he said, though it seemed perfectly natural, yet quite original."

Chantrey not long after executed for the Queen a bust in marble, which preserves his best expression in the noon-tide of his power. A replica at Panshanger is fitly placed in the gallery opposite that of his mother, instinct with loveliness, talent, and ambition.

Although free trade had made considerable way, protection to native corn was still an orthodox superstition which all incurred the social penalty of dislike or scorn who ventured to question openly. Mr. Villiers moved a resolution which condemned the sliding scale, and reckoned among his supporters a score of Whigs, and twice that number of Radicals. But even when the price of provisions had ominously risen, and distress, in town and country, among the labouring classes, was seriously increased, the more forethoughtful section of the Cabinet, headed by Lord J. Russell, did not contemplate more than the substitution of a fixed duty, while the more conservative section, headed by Melbourne, applauded his declaration in 1838, that "the minister who should try to carry the total abolition of the Corn Laws would be considered fit for a lunatic asylum." A great majority in both Houses of Parliament thought so too.

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, from South Street, June 4th, 1838, MS.

² Ibid, June 27th, 1838.

CHAPTER XXIX.

POWER AT LAST.

Macaulay's return from India—Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan—Russia's designs on India—Durham in Canada—Military patronage—Viscount Ebrington.

MACAULAY'S return from India was at hand ; and Spring Rice, living as he did in the society of men of letters, more especially those connected with Cambridge, urged strongly the importance of losing no time in inviting him to join the Government. His colleagues listened and assented ; but in their hearts few of them appreciated the great essayist at the value his friend put upon him. What was an essayist to them ? A fountain of amusement ever fresh and vivifying for dull days in a country house ; a lion to be asked to fill the fourteenth seat at a dinner-table ; a candidate eligible for a Northern borough falling vacant during the recess, perhaps, or perhaps not ; desirable to secure, no doubt, if a secondary post could be found for him which nobody of moneyed or landed influence happened to want. Who is this Mr. Burke, about whom we are bothered : "has he any property ?" And the objection was fatal to the great statesman's ever gaining admission to the Cabinet. The same superstition regarding the exclusive worth of acres and Consols prevailed half a century later among constitutional Whigs ; and strange to say one of the fixed unbeliefs of the Radicals went forth to meet and to embrace it as against Macaulay. What did a sentence-maker know about averages and the reflux of exchange or the rates of wages ? What reliance could be placed upon a man who was too unenlightened to accept the dogmas of Bentham, and too sentimental to acknowledge Mill's Gospel of Utilitarianism ? He had in his youth been tolerably sound in his democratic professions, and had made some showy speeches in Parliament for Reform ; but he had never voted with Hume and Warburton ; and Lord Durham had no opinion of him. What neither official whips nor pragmatical propagandists understood was the great hold which a man of genius, whatever be his parentage or opinions, has upon the middle classes of the community, irrespective of sect or party, trade or calling. In 1838 Macaulay's name was to multitudes a myth, with whom ten years later it had become a household word ; but even then it was a power, silent but active, felt though unseen. Spring Rice understood this, and pressed the matter on the attention of the Lord President, who, better than most men of his class, was quick to comprehend the force of such an appeal :—

"I say nothing," he replied, "on the point you had adverted to as to Macaulay, as we shall so soon meet. It would be nothing to say that I have thought of it a good deal myself ; but what is more material I know that Melbourne and J. Russell have, and although the

question has its difficulties I should hope they were of a nature to be surmounted."¹

Macaulay arrived in England early in June, too late, had his opinion been thought worth asking regarding the affairs of Afghanistan. He talked to Lord Lansdowne and Spring Rice, to Lady Holland and Under-Secretary Stephen, about all manner of things oriental which had struck his imagination with wonder, or left their effigies sharp-cut and indelible in his remembrance. But few if any of his friends would have been swayed by his judgment at any time on a question of military administration or diplomatic policy. He had anecdotes and picturesque sketches enough about the Arabs of the Indus and the vales of Cashmere. But what our chances were of being able to hold the country by the puppet king we had set up, and whether it was wise to attempt so difficult and costly an acquisition, the sparkling reviewer was not the man to explain. His reputation indeed as a declaimer rather than as a debater was still fresh in the minds of his party; and even Sheil, who had no reason for loving or trusting him, desired that an auxiliary so notable and useful should without delay be brought into Parliament. His professions of preference for literary to political occupation only made his "friends think him out of his wits, or coquetting to raise his price."²

A tranquil autumn afforded the First Minister perhaps the sunniest if not the serenest period of enjoyment he had ever known. After three anxious years fortune seemed to have filled his cup to the brim. The country on the whole was prosperous. Ireland was comparatively tranquil, and Canada, though smarting still from recent wounds, seemed ready to adopt submissively the new institutions about to be given her. Letters from the South of Ireland noted many symptoms of social and industrial improvement, the spirit of agitation slept, and there was a general disposition among all parties to believe in the advent of better times under a new reign. The Home Secretary suggested indeed that Parliament should meet before Christmas to complete the legislative measures contemplated for the re-establishment of representative rule in Canada. The Premier by letter consulted several of his colleagues, stating frankly his own opinions and desiring to have theirs.

In view of the events impending in the East and the possibility that a movement on Herat might provoke a rupture with the Czar, ministers deemed it necessary to take precautions against any sudden attack by sea. For twenty years after Waterloo the vulnerability of the realm had rarely if ever occurred to the minds of men in power. But during that interval great changes had been made in the means of naval warfare and in the facilities for the rapid transport of troops and stores. If the number of men borne on the estimates had been reduced for the sake of economy, unabated confidence was still reposed

¹ From Bowood, October 19th, 1838, MS.

² Letter to Macvey Napier, June 14th, 1838.

in their valour and discipline; and although impressment had been abolished by statute few doubted that upon a pinch extra bounties would give back to the service as many blue-jackets as it required. But steam had deprived us of two advantages that in the great days of our maritime renown had stood us in good stead—the superiority of our seamanship, and the favour of the fickle winds. Having allowed the Army, Navy, and Ordnance to be cut down to a point unprecedently low, the Victor of Waterloo gradually changed his mind, and began to grow uneasy at the defenceless condition of our coasts and dock-yards. Ruminating the whole bearings of the question in his solitary rides at Strathfieldsaye he resolved to communicate his anxieties to the Government, and on the 4th of October he confidentially addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury certain practical suggestions for consideration in framing the next budget. A minute was in consequence adopted by the Lords of the Treasury, not long afterwards, tending in the direction he desired; but the commercial panic of the following year, and the depression of trade in consequence, caused any increase of estimates to be deferred to a more convenient season; and not much was consequently done. Palmerston now suggested writing to “the Duke” unofficially asking his advice with a view to guard against any emergency that might arise, and the response was, as usual, outspoken but considerate, and patriotic without any tinge of personal or party prejudice, which were never suffered by him to mingle in the discussion of questions of the kind. Meanwhile Mr. F. Baring had furnished the First Lord with the papers on the subject at the Treasury; and it must have been with some feeling of chagrin that he felt himself obliged to admit his not having known of their existence before:—

“MY DEAR DUKE,—I have this morning received your letter here, and am much obliged to you for it. When I wrote mine I was not aware of your Grace’s of the 4th of October, 1835, addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, nor of the Treasury Minute of the 23rd of December in the same year founded upon it. These documents have since been sent to me. It must be obvious to the most ignorant in these matters, that the question of the defence of the coast under the new circumstances which have been produced by new inventions, must be considered generally and not with reference only to particular points; and I am very happy to learn that it is your Grace’s intention to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon the subject.”¹

On the accession of Queen Victoria, the German possessions of her house, which by inheritance went in the male line only, devolved upon her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who thenceforth took up his residence in Hanover. A large quantity of the royal plate, and a portion of the crown jewels belonged to King Ernest as heir-looms of his inheritance or as bequests under the will of his mother. Ministers had no desire or motive to dispute the claim, but they could not, as a

¹From Windsor Ca 1, September 25th, 1838, MS.

matter of public duty, assent to the partition of so much valuable property of the royal house without direct evidence that would satisfy a court of law. Lord Cottenham undertook to investigate the title, and report for the information of the Cabinet ; and in furtherance of his inquiries, Melbourne addressed the following private letter to the Duke of Wellington :—

“MY DEAR DUKE,—You are probably aware that the King of Hanover is urging a claim to those of the crown jewels which were by the will of Queen Charlotte bequeathed to the Crown of Hanover. The Lord Chancellor, in order to form his opinion upon the liability of the claim, thinks it necessary that he should be acquainted with the provisions of the will of King George IV., which may materially affect the question, and as your Grace is one of the executors of that will, I have undertaken to learn from you whether you would object to putting the Chancellor in possession of that instrument.—Yours faithfully, etc.”¹

By return of post he received the subjoined reply :—

“MY DEAR LORD,—I have not by me the late King George IV.’s will, and I don’t think anybody could find it for me. If the Lord Chancellor should require it immediately I will go to town purposely to get it ; if not I will send it to his Lordship on the first occasion on which I shall go to London. The Duke of Cambridge gave me some time ago some questions which he had received from Hanover on the subject of the claim of the Crown of Hanover to certain of the crown jewels. I declined to give any answer, and I recommended the Duke of Cambridge to take the same course. My reason was that it appeared to me that any questions from the King of Hanover ought to be sent to one of her Majesty’s subjects by the Queen’s servants. I don’t know what the Duke of Cambridge did.”²

On this his correspondent wrote :—

“MY DEAR DUKE,—I sent your note to the Chancellor, and now I send you his answer, by which you will perceive that it will serve every purpose if you can let him have the will the first time you come to London.”³

Lord Cottenham’s note ran thus :—

“There certainly can be no such hurry as to justify asking the Duke of Wellington to go to London on purpose. I am anxious that we should come to some conclusion before a suit is actually instituted, which in form will probably be a bill against the late King’s executors, but that step will certainly not be taken without further communication. Therefore if the Duke will recollect it next time he goes to London, it will no doubt be in very good time.”⁴

To his oldest and closest fellow-thinker in all that related to the conduct of the Government, he wrote at the beginning of October :—

¹ From Windsor Castle, September 25th, 1838.

² From Walmer Castle, September 26th, 1838.

³ From Windsor Castle, September 29th, 1838.

⁴ Wimbledon, September 28th, 1838.

"I received your letters of the 28th ult. here yesterday morning. You do not say where you are going, but I presume home, and therefore I direct this letter to Bowood. We must have a Council soon for the further prorogation of Parliament, and I shall propose Saturday the 6th here. If you could come on that day and stay until Tuesday or Wednesday, and meet John Russell and Palmerston, we might have some conversation upon the Eastern affairs, which will be desirable. If it is inconvenient to you, do not do it; but if it suits, you may consider this as an expression of her Majesty's wish. The Queen would be very glad to see Lady Lansdowne at the same time, but would not wish her to undertake the journey if she is unwell, or unless it is perfectly agreeable."

Lord Durham's mission to Canada, from which much good had been expected, was brought to an abrupt termination by a decision of the House of Lords, which condemned and compelled ministers to reverse one of his most important executive acts. In the belief that the plenary powers of Government with which he had been clothed, warranted not only his respiting political offenders, but substituting banishment for incarceration during a specific period, he had, with the advice of his council, exiled to Bermuda certain captive chiefs of the recent insurrection. No such punishment, it was argued by Brougham, was known to English law. The case was one without precedent, and after much discussion it was deemed inexpedient to allow a colonial governor to interpolate by his mere will a new form of penalty in the criminal jurisprudence of the empire. Lord Durham could not bear rebuke or question from the Home Government, and forthwith announced his resignation. A few days later, when talked over by Charles Buller, he repented, and wrote privately as if he might yet be coaxed, for the sake of the public service, to remain. Melbourne, who understood him well, and, as he said, thought he was better in Canada than England, laughed at his impulsiveness, but was for letting him have his way. Lansdowne thought so likewise:—

"It seemed to him almost impossible that after what he had done he should withdraw his resignation; still, what wounded vanity had done gratified vanity might undo, and he should not consider it as quite off the cards that the address of the inhabitants, if generally signed and urgently pressed, might induce him so far to reconsider his determination as to delay at all events his departure till he heard from England. No step should be taken till they heard from him again."¹

This was the spirit of discernment, and temper sagacious and circumspect, in which Lansdowne habitually weighed every public question, and which rendered him under all circumstances one of the safest and best of counsellors. Melbourne's confidence in his judgment was unbounded, although by nature no two minds could be more differently constituted.

¹ From Bowood, October 19th, 1838, MS.

The impression created upon Durham's friends in Government at home on learning his decision may best be given in their own words. The Colonial Secretary remained in town, where he was joined on the 17th by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, writing on the next day, says :—

"The despatches from Canada are gone to Melbourne at Windsor. Durham, on receiving Glenelg's letters of the 18th of August, resolved to resign. The letter was written three days after the proceedings in Parliament had been made known to him. His despatch is clever but most abundantly bitter, and is strong in its reproaches of the silence as well as the speeches of the Government. He impugns the attack on his Ordinance on the ground of its illegality. He says that the Bermuda section was all but surplusage, and that it might have been followed up by an act of the Bermuda Legislature. This is evidently an after-thought, and was never previously suggested by himself. I remember asking the question in Cabinet and being told by Howick that the Bermudians were so jealous on the point of convicts and penal colonists, that there was no probability that such a step would be taken by them. Poor Glenelg, who is at this moment oppressed by the death of his brother Robert, is out of town. He seems to think that Durham might be induced to remain. But I think that impossible, and apprehend that he will be on his way before any letter can reach him. Besides, his reply to the British deputies announces his intention ; it seems to be a burning of his boats. He speaks of justifying his proceedings in his place in Parliament, and expresses great bitterness and disappointment. He reverts to the case of Turton, whose appointment he says was suggested to him by a member of the Government. In this he alludes to Hobhouse, as I am informed. The contingency is a difficult one. Colborne luckily consents to remain in command of the troops. Whether he could exercise Durham's powers, or whether those powers should be confided to him is another and a very different one. Robert Grant's death is a most unfortunate event coming at a most unfortunate moment. I think it probable that Melbourne will call us all together."¹

The following was addressed from Windsor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer :—

"I have this morning received yours from Manchester. I wrote you the note which has been forwarded to you, because Anson assured me that you were expected in London, and I feared lest you should arrive and find us, at least as many of us as were within reach, assembled at Windsor. I wanted to consider these Indian and Persian affairs, which look very awkward, but which, I trust, will not have the serious consequences which they appear to menace. The recent expedition appears to me to have been a mistake. How to get out of it with credit, or rather with the least discredit, is now the question. We desire to instruct Auckland not to send the additional force demanded

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, October 11th, 1838, from Downing Street, MS.

by McNeil to the Persian Gulf, and still more not to attempt the forward move into Persia, also recommended by McNeil. If the additional force has been already sent, and if the move into Persia has been undertaken and commenced (the latter I trust will not have been the case), there is no help for it. They must then act according to circumstances, in ignorance of which we could not take upon ourselves to send instructions. I am in hopes, however, that the matter will somehow or other blow over, and that Russia is not prepared to push at present to the extremity of hostilities. Upon consultation with John Russell and Lansdowne, we have fixed upon Monday the 19th of next month for our assembling in London, and I have written to everybody requesting attendance upon that day. You have omitted to put into your letter the Duke of Wellington's note to which you refer. When Lord Carrington died I sent to the Duke the report of the Ordnance upon Deal Castle, and in his reply he told me that he was about to write to you upon the defence of the coast in the new circumstances of maritime war. I have seen some letters from Nichol, which appear to me very rational, and the whole affair of the Poor Law Act appears to me, to say the least, to bear a more favourable aspect than could have been expected from the temper which was supposed to prevail. You should write and impress upon Nichol any circumstances which appear to you to be of importance. It is, as you say, most desirable to obtain Macaulay; any means of doing so I should be willing to adopt. If any should offer themselves, you may depend upon my availing myself of them, but it is not so easy to create them. Have you any notion as to how he stands inclined?"¹

After settling his quarrel with Mr. Wallis, whose criticism upon Mackintosh he had attacked in terms unwarrantably severe, Macaulay went abroad, where he remained during the autumn. In October the First Minister wrote to him, offering him the position of Judge Advocate in terms of more than usual compliment. The letter reached him at Florence, with one from the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging his acceptance, not only for the sake of the party but for his own: and reminding him that the duties were not onerous, the salary £2,500 a year, and the rank that of Privy Councillor. But his recent vows of devotion to the cause of party did not oblige him he thought to accept any subordinate post that it might be convenient to offer him; and having already profited more than most men of his standing and services by public employment, he felt all the more free to decline political livery and pay, without political power. He notes in his diary how little he felt complimented by the proposal. It did not strike him as even tempting. Money he did not want. He had little, but he had enough. Right Honourable before one's name was a bauble which would be far, very far indeed, beneath him to care about.

Melbourne wished that the Cabinet should meet earlier than usual:—

¹ From Windsor Castle, October 12th, 1838, MS.

"I have waited all the morning before I wrote to you, in expectation of seeing John Russell, who informed me that he would come up to-day. He is not yet arrived, at half-past five, and I therefore fear that he may have been detained by Lady John's not being so well. I should have written before in answer to yours, recommending an earlier meeting of the Cabinet, but you will perceive by the letters which I enclose that it has been, and still is a question whether it must not assemble immediately, and with as little delay as possible. If John Russell perseveres in the opinions which he gives in these letters, we must of course meet directly and discuss the question; I myself differ from him. I cannot see any reason, or any necessity for an early meeting of Parliament. It appears to me that there is no danger in leaving Canada in Sir John Colborne's hands for the present, and that his powers are amply sufficient for all emergencies that may arise. No event has happened of which we were not put in possession or might not have anticipated when we suffered Parliament to separate, and if there is no necessity for its meeting, I am sure there will be great advantage to the country in the delay of the discussion. I have consulted Rice, Glenelg, Palmerston, Duncannon, and they are all of the same opinion. I should wish to learn yours."¹

Persia's designs on Herat had for some time occupied the attention of the Home and Indian Governments, and by degrees projects were matured that led to the memorable, and, as it proved unfortunate, policy of interference with the domestic affairs of Afghanistan:—

"I received yesterday from Hobhouse Auckland's letters, and I send them up to-day to Palmerston. Hobhouse writes to have them back again as soon as possible. They should be sent round without delay. Auckland has adopted the course which, in the meeting we had at Windsor, where there were seven of us, we agreed to recommend to him, viz., not to follow McNeil's suggestion of moving into Persia from Bushire, but to take decisive measures in Afghanistan. It is a decisive move, and may bring on great events, but I believe necessary. This is no less than the question—Who is to be master of Central Asia? I thought the appointment respecting the foreign claims had been settled. You had better have it made directly. Newport must wait a little while before he gets his remittances. I do not remember that anything was said about the amount of his retiring pension. I am glad Stephenson holds the language he does to you, but he is very much dissatisfied with his position, and very anxious for a move. I do not like the suggestion about Ireland. Only think of the importance of that part of the empire, and the thorough wrongheadedness of the person proposed, and the importance which, after all, his connection would give to an indiscretion on his part. Lord Grey in or out, successful or unsuccessful, was never satisfied with anything, nor with himself, and therefore it is unreasonable to expect that he should hold with others."²

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, October 25th, 1838, from Downing Street, MS.

² Letter to T. S. Rice, October 29th, 1838, MS.

The Lord President was against an early meeting, but wished advantage to be taken of the comparative subsidence of party feeling to promote a comprehensive settlement of the Poor Law and Corporation Questions in Ireland. About the latter there was no difference of opinion in the Cabinet : about the former there was much. Some were for applying absolutely the principle of the workhouse test in the English Act of 1834, while others thought it inadequate and unsuitable. More critical and urgent topics, however, were about to absorb their immediate attention. In their recent correspondence, little allusion was made to Eastern affairs. Palmerston and Hobhouse had sent their last word to the Governor-General, and could only wait for his reply. At length it came, and brought the tidings that he had resolved to plunge into the unfathomed difficulties and dangers of an Afghan war. Palmerston lost no time in forwarding the official communications to the Treasury, accompanying them with a brief comment :—

“ Here are the Indian despatches. Auckland seems to have taken a just view of the importance of making Afghanistan a British and not a Russian dependency, since the autocrat has determined that it shall not be left to itself. If we succeed in taking the Afghans under our protection and in garrisoning (if necessary) Herat, we shall regain our ascendancy in Persia, and get our commercial treaty with that power. But British ascendancy in Persia gives security on the eastward to Turkey, and tends to make the Sultan more independent, and to place the Dardanelles more securely out of the grasp of Nicholas. Again our baffling on so great a scale the intrigues and attempts of Russia cannot fail to add greatly to the moral weight and political influence of England, and to help us in many other European questions ; while it must also tend to give us strength and authority at home. I fear, however, that it may be necessary for us, in order to maintain the attitude which we have been compelled to take, to increase somewhat in the spring our naval means of home defence. Can you dine with me on Saturday next to meet the Duke of Lucca ; pray do if you can.”¹

The easy triumph of the expedition which replaced the exiled Shah Sooja in the palace of Cabul, with British troops cantoned around it to guarantee his safety, was chanted in many an editorial hymn of praise ; and it was not Melbourne's way to grudge the gladness of his friends in their success because he doubted inwardly its durability. Nor, when reverses came, and the crazy fabric of Afghan annexation suddenly crumbled down, did he think of casting off his full share of accountability. He had assented to a venture which turned out disastrously, and there were those who scrupled not to hint that, in doing so, he had suffered his own judgment to be overborne by arguments that did not convince. On the other hand it is but fair to bear in mind the declaration of the Duke, recording his unqualified approval

¹ From Stanhope Street, October 31st, 1838.

of the preparations made for the Afghan campaign, and the manner in which it had been conducted :—

“Having been, for a great part of my life, selected to carry into execution, under superior authority, measures of this description, no man can be more capable of judging, from experience, of the merits of Government in planning and carrying into operation such measures ; and I should be the last man to doubt, at any time the expediency of this or the other House expressing its approbation of the conduct of the political servants of the Crown, in planning and working out all arrangements, preparatory to carrying into execution, great military operations. It happened to me, by accident, that I had some knowledge of the arrangements made for the execution of this great military enterprise ; and I must say that I have never known an occasion on which the duty of a Government was performed on a large scale on which a more adequate provision was made for all contingencies that could occur, and for all the various events which could, and which did, in fact, occur during the campaign. It would indeed be presumptuous in me to say more on this subject, having, I repeat, been made acquainted only by accident with the arrangements made preparatory to the campaign now brought under public consideration. With respect to the military services performed, I can say nothing beyond, or more deserving the officers and troops, than what has been stated by the Governor-General in his despatch. I am well acquainted with the officers who have directed and performed these services ; and I must say that there are no men in the service who deserve a higher degree of approbation for the manner in which, on all occasions, they have discharged their duty ; and that, in no instance that I have ever heard of, have such services been performed in a manner better calculated to deserve and receive the approbation of Parliament and of the country.”

Before a day was fixed for the meeting of the Cabinet, the unexpected death of Lady J. Russell deprived his colleagues of the presence and counsel of the Home Secretary :—

“This is indeed a heavy blow for poor John Russell. I have heard from him, and I have seen letters from him to Fox Maule and Gore. He is evidently most deeply afflicted, but bears up manfully. He says he can himself attend to no business at present, but has given such directions as were obvious, for the transaction of that of the office. This amongst us may be very easily managed. I expect that after a short time I shall hear more of him with respect to his future intentions, and the period at which he may be able to attend to public affairs. It seems to me that it will not be expedient to meet for serious business without him, and that in case he cannot come so soon as the 19th, it will be better to delay our assembling. I mean to be up on the 9th to the dinner at Guildhall, but shall have to return here.”¹

“I have this morning received a letter from Tavistock, expressing

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, November 5th, 1838, from Windsor Castle, MS.

John Russell's wish to be relieved from attending any Cabinets at present, and not stating any period at which he would be able to do so. So that, considering the important questions that are pending, it appears that it would be unwise to delay our meeting beyond the time already fixed, viz., the 19th inst. John Russell is prepared to retain his office, but would wish not to continue leader of the House of Commons, to the labour of which duty he says he feels certain that he should find himself unequal. He has not determined on the step of resigning it, and, if time is given, he may be induced to change his views; but this is his present feeling. Give me a line to say how long you shall remain in London. I should wish to talk to you upon the present conjuncture. When events are evidently coming on which require the utmost energy, it is both mortifying and alarming to be so harassed by misfortune and calamity. Pozzo has received this morning a despatch from the Emperor, desiring him to remain here at present, and of a pacific character; proposing that the Shah of Persia should give up all further attempts upon Afghanistan, that we should retire from Herat and that the two missions, Russian and British, should be established upon their ancient footing of intercourse and co-operation at Teheran."¹

"I return you the Speaker's letter, with many thanks. I agree with it, and disagree with it, just as you do. His view of Durham's intention and conduct is very correct, but the proclamation is the really strong point against him. His coming away is subject to the remarks made by the Speaker, technically and theoretically, but practically it relieves us from embarrassment and danger. He had conducted, and was conducting himself in such a manner that his stay would have been perilous. What he did was often right, but always so done as to be totally indefensible. With respect to statements, etc., whenever my opinion has been asked, I have rather discouraged any such idea, and have particularly advised that no attack at all should be made upon him, and no more defence of us than is absolutely necessary. This I have done, because, in the first place, the difficulty which he had created did not appear to me to be very great, the greater part of the community not being very noisy upon this subject, and the addresses which have been presented to him being very moderate and not pronouncing any very decided opinion upon the points which we conceive to be at issue, but principally because as yet he has made no attack, and considers himself as having made no attack; and you know not how soon, or in what manner to defend yourself, until you know where the assault will be."²

"What a very characteristic course it has been in Durham after coming home with his budget of disclosures, to have held no communication with any member of the Government."³

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, November 11th, 1838, from South Street, MS.

² December 14th, 1838.

³ To Lord Lansdowne from T. S. Rice, December 15th, 1838.

"John Russell writes that the Cabinets should begin on the 10th of January, and he will be prepared himself to attend upon that day. I shall go down to Brighton either the 24th or the 26th, and return to London on the 3rd or 4th of January. Think about Canada, everybody, in and out, says that we must be prepared with some decided proposition at the opening of the Session."¹

"Since I have been here I have had an opportunity of trying what you suggested respecting Lord Chichester, and I find that there is every reason to think that he would not be willing to engage in the matter. I have seen the Duke of Richmond, and talked to him pretty fully. He is very friendly, but would not be willing to unite himself more closely. He is very eager about the Navy, upon which he says there is a strong feeling. If we were even to take the resolutions of changing the Government of Ireland, which I cannot help thinking would be considered perilous, how are we to find room for Normanby? I have a great objection to changes in the departments which are made the objects of attack. It is like suffering judgment by default, and the parties run at are, of course, most unwilling to accede to arrangements which are, in fact, a surrender of their own reputations. John Russell will be in town on the 10th, and I suppose you will come at the same time."²

Like every one of discernment and reflection, given to the study of national history, he read with avidity the despatches of the Duke of Wellington, then recently published, and spoke in laudatory terms of the manner in which they had been edited. Colonel Gurwood asked the Duke whether he might not hope for promotion, or some other reward for his services, but was rather dissuaded from seeking for the former, on literary grounds, and advised to prefer pecuniary advantage, if he could obtain it from Government. His Grace put on paper the grounds on which he thought such a claim might be advanced, and permitted the statement to be referred to, as being from his pen. Other friends advised Colonel Gurwood to address the First Lord of the Treasury, assuming that he had expressed a disposition to further his views. This Melbourne explained to him was a mistake, as he had never considered whether his work would bring the author within the sphere of literary pensions; he could not interfere with the patronage of Lord Hill; and her Majesty having already twenty military and naval aides-de-camp, he could not recommend an addition to that number. But, in a few weeks he communicated to him his intention of recommending him for a pension of £200 a year.³ The Duke in the meantime wrote "to assure his lordship that he had no intention of intruding himself into the affair, or of making any communication to him upon it, much less an application. He had no right to interfere in the exercise of the powers intrusted to the minister, much less to solicit any favour for any gentleman;" but he

¹ To T. S. Rice, December 22nd, 1838.

² To Lord Lansdowne, from Brighton, January 2nd, 1839.

³ Colonel Gurwood to the Duke, March 11th, 1839.

thought the work in question deserving of reward, and if "there was a disposition to confer a pension it would be applauded by him."¹

Two days after the Duke committed to paper, at some length, his views of the line of demarcation that ought to be observed between political influence and military patronage. Convinced when he became Premier in 1828 that the administration of the Horse Guards ought, for the sake of the Army and of the nation, to be kept as free as possible from political or party views, he laid down for himself the rule of refusing to exercise personal influence in favour even of private friends. Part of this curious document has been already quoted; the remainder may be most fitly given in connection with the incident out of which it arose:—

"Lord Hill and I were connected in his Majesty's service for the first time thirty-four years ago. He was afterwards under my command; but whether under my command, or otherwise, there has not been an occasion in that lengthened period in which I have not been ready to give him every assistance in my power to enable him to execute any purpose which he might have in view for the public service. From the moment at which I resigned the command of the Army in 1828, by desire of my colleagues, I considered it my duty to avoid to interfere, most particularly in matters of patronage. First, this course was in conformity with the principle on which my resignation was required. Secondly: interference on my part in one case of claim supposed to be founded on services, must have been followed by interference in hundreds of others, to the great injury of the service, and the diminution of respect for the independent character of Lord Hill, entrusted by the King as the General Commanding the Army in Chief. I have therefore *never interfered* in such cases, excepting when my advice has been required by Lord Hill, the Sovereign, or the minister. In one or two instances, officers have memorialised me to pray that I would recommend their cases to Lord Hill. The utmost that I have ever done with such memorials has been to inclose each in a blank cover, directed to Lord Hill. But I have not interfered in general military affairs more than in personal matters and the distribution of patronage, excepting when my advice and opinion has been called for. I have stated that Lord Hill and I have been long connected in the service, and in the habits of intimate and confidential intercourse. When his Lordship is in a difficulty, he knows that he can rely upon me to assist him by every means in my power to get the better of it, and he comes to me accordingly. I foresee these difficulties, and I may have gone before his desire to be assisted, and have given him my advice before it was asked, particularly in one or two instances latterly. I think that when the accounts arrived of the Canadian rebellion in 1837, and 1838, Lord Hill was actually coming into my room to ask for my opinion, when I gave him the paper just drawn which contained it. I mention these circumstances as

¹ From Apsley House, February 9th, 1839.

showing clearly the nature of the intercourse between the General Commanding-in-Chief and me, and proving that the sole object in view of both, is to promote the prosperity of her Majesty's service, and by no means a desire on my part to interfere in anything, least of all in the patronage of the Army, or what may be called personal matters. Colonel Gurwood is in the habit of seeing my letters ; my secretary could show him copies of hundreds of answers to applications that I should interfere to obtain promotions, all written upon the principle of non-interference stated in this memorandum."¹

A more remarkable communication was made on the second of March from the Duke of Wellington :—

"(Private and confidential.) I have been so much in the habit of assisting the Queen's Government whenever I can, and of communicating with yourself when I see Indian affairs to require it, that I do not apologise for sending you the enclosed paper. You will be anxious to know how the information came to me. I know all sorts of persons ; they talk and write to me confidentially, and I frequently hear matters that are important. This information was communicated to me by an English gentleman who sent over this intelligence by his brother. He saw the paper containing the proposition, approved by the Emperor's signature. It had been referred to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Marine and War, and was referred back to the Emperor for final orders. We must not despise this mode of acquiring information ; I could tell you some curious anecdotes to illustrate this part of the subject. I think it very doubtful that the Russians will venture upon the execution of such a plan. If they did, they would first seize the Cape. I don't doubt that the proposition has been made. That which is more probable is that they would send their Baltic fleet into the Mediterranean. With this aid they might practically carry into execution the separate article of their defensive treaty with the Turks. But I should not act fairly or half perform the duty I have undertaken, if I did not warn you of the danger of allowing this fleet to go down Channel at all ; possibly diplomatic interference, at all events, a demonstration of the assembling of a sufficient force in the ports of this country, would prevent the attempt. Your Lordship's most faithful servant, etc."

Memorandum enclosed—

"A proposal has been made to the Emperor of Russia to send his fleet now in the Baltic twenty-seven sail of the line, with fifteen large frigates with 30,000 men on board the same, and transports to carry other troops to the East Indies, the object being to attack the three great settlements, Fort William, Fort St. George, and Bombay."

No time was lost in acknowledging the receipt of information so singular :—

¹ MS. memorandum on military patronage at Apsley House, March 13th, 1839. When in 1847 the Duke retained the command of the Army he withdrew from active participation in party warfare, and took his seat on the cross benches in the House of Lords.

"I am very much obliged to you," wrote the Premier from Downing Street, "for your letter, which I will have immediately considered. I quite agree with you that the information ought not to be despised or neglected, and that this particular information comes from a source which gives it a claim to attention. But do you not think it improbable that the Emperor of Russia should seriously conceive the idea of an expedition of such magnitude with objects at such a distance? Buonaparte's going from the south of France to Egypt was nothing compared to it, though it was attempted in the face of the vast superiority of England, then in full preparation and activity."

Before he slept the Duke rejoined :—

"I write a line in answer to your Lordship's note just received. I believe that the account given of the paper which I mentioned to you is substantially correct. I think that the execution of the Mediterranean plan is more probable than the larger one. But supposing that the policy of the two Governments, English and Russian, places them in a state of hostility towards each other, I do not think that the execution of the larger plan is, or would be deemed impracticable, with the knowledge that I have of the existing state of the means and resources of this kingdom for its defence and that of its extended Empire, and the constitutional difficulties, and the delay which must attend the measures to form and equip a force sufficient for its defence. Such a fleet as is described, so supplied with four months' provisions, could reach the Cape, which is, I believe, nearly defenceless, and with a diminished peace establishment of troops and no naval force. This colony would be seized, all descriptions of supplies and refreshment would here be received. Trincomalee, equally defenceless, without garrison, the troops in Ceylon having been again recently reduced in number, would fall. This is the only harbour in that part of the East. The rest of the plan is more difficult. But if the two Powers are really in a state of hostility, I don't know of any plan by which Russia could strike a blow against this country, which would affect more real interests, all of which are more or less in relation with those parts of the world in which it is supposed that each of the Governments has objects which would bring the two into collision."¹

It must be remembered that in the spring of 1839, a numerous detachment of the Indian Army was occupying Afghanistan, against the will and in defiance of the ill-suppressed resentment of the warlike race whose independence under guise of a protectorate we had assailed. In Egypt Mehemet Ali was steadily making preparation for the conquest of Syria, in which the following year he was nearly successful. It was no secret that his aggressive designs against the Porte were favoured by France, and consequently that he would be unable to reduce the strength of our squadron in the Mediterranean. The total number of men borne on the Navy estimates for the year

¹ All three letters bear date, March 2nd, 1839.

was but 33,665, including 2000 boys and 9000 marines ; and the total number of ships of the line, and frigates actually in commission did not exceed thirty, though supplemented by numerous smaller vessels.

On the morning after the interchange of confidential notes above given, on the future and fate of empires, the Duke opened a private correspondence with his political opponent on a much happier theme.

"MY LORD,—My son, Lord Douro, has proposed to marry Lady Elizabeth Hay. You will probably be surprised that I should trouble you with this information, but you will recollect that you are the principal trustee of the grants to my family. The Acts which regulate these grants have enabled the Duke of Wellington to jointure a wife, but not his son, or the Duke to jointure his son's wife. It is desirable to bring in a bill to amend the Acts upon this subject ; and I venture to trouble your Lordship upon the subject, in order to request you to fix a time with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at which you will receive my solicitor, Mr. Parkinson, that he may submit to you the bill which it is proposed to introduce. That which I should propose is that the Duke of Wellington should have the power of contracting to jointure his son's wife to the same amount as the existing Acts give him the power of contracting for a jointure for his own wife ; that is, £2,500 a year. I have the honour, etc., etc."

With felicitations on the approaching event Melbourne replied that what was proposed to be done was strictly right and reasonable, and, speaking for himself only, and on first impression, he could not see any objection to be raised to the contemplated bill. The sooner the matter was taken in hand the better, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and himself would be ready to receive Mr. Parkinson at half-past two o'clock next day.¹

The lenient exercise of executive authority in Ireland by Lord Mulgrave had not extinguished agrarian crime, and when, in addition to other shocking outrages, the Earl of Norbury was, in open day, while walking with a relative, shot in his own demesne,² the outcry against the Government waxed loud and threatening. Sheil was sent for one day by the Premier, and asked his opinion as to what should be done :—

"Do you remember," he replied, "your question to me at Crampton's table twelve years ago, 'How is it they don't shoot one of the big 'uns?' You see they have come to that way of thinking at last."

Melbourne looked very grave, and said in a low voice :—

"Yes, I remember ; it is terrible ; and no one can tell me what is to be done. As one of the severest judges said to me when in Ireland, if hanging would do, it ought to have been done long ago. I do not believe in exceptional measures ; and yet, I suppose, Stanley and Peel will put us in a minority if we don't take them."

Sheil was at the best of times one of Job's comforters. He undervalued the potency of social grievances, and ascribed to political and

¹ From South Street, March 4th, 1839.

² January 1st, 1839.

religious causes all the discontent and insubordination that prevailed. Drummond was, on these points, a better and clearer guide. By long residence and open-hearted sympathy he had come to understand better than any Englishman of his day whence the waters of bitterness welled up in crime, and his four years' experience in the daily administration of the law in Ireland qualified him better than any other man to say what should and what should not be done. His influential counsel, given throughout that period, never vacillated, and while he lived the apothegm (claimed by Normanby and) embodied in his celebrated letter to the magistrates who called for a new Coercion Bill, was maintained undeviatingly : "it must be always remembered that property has its duties as well as its rights." The enunciation of this now admitted, but till then unheard of principle, stimulated many Opposition Peers to wrath. A select Committee was obtained by them early in the session to inquire into agrarian crime, and the methods which should be taken for its suppression. The inquiry from the first assumed the form and tone of an inquisition into the conduct of the Viceregal Government. The unwonted exercise of the power of reprieve had frequently been determined on without the recommendation of the convicting judge. The Committee, amongst other things, reported this to be a practice novel and reprehensible, and a resolution to that effect was moved by Brougham.¹ Ministers met the accusation of culpable leniency with a direct negative, and were beaten by a majority of five. The next day, Lord John, alluding to the vote of the Peers, declared, that as Home Secretary, he did not concur in the historic truth or the constitutional propriety of attempting thus to limit the merciful discretion of the Crown, and that until it should be so limited by Act of Parliament, he would not advise the Queen to observe it. Sir Robert Peel characteristically shrank from any attempt to embody the doctrine of limited mercy in a legislative resolution ; but endeavoured to dissuade the Commons from a counter resolution moved by Lord John on the 15th April, which was carried by a majority of twenty-two.

Normanby, tired of playing mock king upon provincial boards, was eager to assume the *rôle* for which he deemed himself eminently fitted, as a leading courtier and statesman ; and the portfolio of Colonial Affairs (though not without misgiving) was transferred to him. Viscount Ebrington was deemed the person best qualified to succeed him as Governor of Ireland.² He had long enjoyed the private friendship and public confidence of all the influential members of the Administration, and had more than once rendered them essential service. Hitherto he had filled no office, being content to let the more eager and ambitious divide amongst them the honours and advantages of power, while he was ever ready to head resistance to any attack which seemed to threaten the stability of his party. A commoner had not held the post of Viceroy since the days of Henry Cromwell ;

¹ Hansard, March 5th, 1839. ² His appointment bears date, April 3rd, 1839.

and on constitutional grounds it was considered right that, as the Chief Secretary was responsible in person to the Lower House for the acts of the Irish department, the Lord Lieutenant should be able to defend them as a member of the Upper House. It was therefore proposed that Lord Ebrington should be called up by writ in his father's lifetime, and should take his seat as a Peer before assuming his new functions. The announcement of his nomination gave general satisfaction, and the necessary arrangements being completed, he left town to spend a few days with his relative Lord King at Ockham. While there a special messenger brought him a communication marked private and immediate from Downing Street, desiring his presence without delay. A vote in Parliament had taken place which seemed of more threatening consequence than had been first apparent ; and Melbourne was discomfited by the fear that he had unwittingly beguiled his friend into accepting a conspicuous and expensive post, only to incur the vexation and ridicule of being speedily obliged to relinquish it. He could not therefore rest until he had released Lord Ebrington from his engagement, and told him candidly why he did so. He was met, as he deserved, with unselfish frankness and good humour. Lord Ebrington said that "as he had never sought the office, and had undertaken it only to assist his friends in the conduct of the public service, he was ready to retain or to relinquish it as might seem most conducive to that object ; and that if reasons into which he did not inquire rendered it preferable to confer the Viceroyalty on some one else, he did not wish that any consideration for his feelings should be allowed to stand in the way." Melbourne at once replied that he had no one else in view : on the contrary, he thought it would be very difficult under the circumstances to find a substitute in whom he could confide. But he knew by experience that an eldest son could not afford to incur for nothing the charge of a costly outfit : and to throw away a position of great weight in the Commons avowedly for the sake of an object that might not be securable, would justly cause vexation and regret to himself and all concerned. He repeated unreservedly the assurance that his only anxiety was that which he had already stated. Lord Ebrington thanked him warmly for the delicacy and generosity which had evidently prompted him on the occasion. His father had made matters easy for him as to expense ; he did not regard the recent vote quite so gloomily as other people did ; but whatever might betide he was ready to perform what he had undertaken, if it were thought desirable that he should do so. Looking back at the transaction after a lapse of years, he always said that he valued infinitely more the friendship that offered to release him from his obligation, than the flattering terms in which he had been invited to take office ; and that he hardly thought any other Minister in a like situation would have acted as Melbourne had done. His unselfishness where the interests of his party were concerned, was illustrated by his persistent refusal to appropriate to himself any portion of the favours or honours which,

by his advice, the Crown could bestow. The Sovereign on one occasion pressed him to accept the blue riband, as certain of his predecessors in the administrative primacy had done, assigning as a reason that this was almost the only way in which royalty could signify to the world the high appreciation felt of his faithful services. He thought perhaps that it might seem ungracious if he declined without giving a reason, and that a formal profession of indifference to a decoration coveted and manœuvred for sometimes by the best-born in the realm would expose him to the suspicion of overweening self-esteem. His wit came to the rescue, and prompted the suggestion that he was bound to husband resources of the kind for sustaining the influence of his Government, and not to waste them in the gratification of personal feeling.

"A Garter may attach to us somebody of consequence whom nothing else will reach ; but what would be the use of my taking it ? I cannot bribe myself."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RESTORED CABINET.

Formation of railways in Ireland—The Speakership—Resignation of ministers—Ladies of the bedchamber—Ministers resume office—Postal reform.

THE session of 1839 witnessed the failure of another measure which many had looked forward to with sanguine expectations for the industrial improvement of Ireland ; and the abandonment of which, not in consequence of any actual defeat, but in the more significant silence of despair, caused deep disheartenment among moderate men of all parties in that country. The darling scheme of Mr. Drummond for the social regeneration of his adopted country was the creation by Government aid of a complete system of railways. In 1835 joint-stock enterprise had laid hold of the chief lines of communication in England ; and by prodigious outlay, to a great extent unremunerative, in litigation before committees and in buying off opposing proprietors at extravagant rates of compensation for land, had secured the profit and the patronage of huge monopolies. The scandalous incidents of the proceedings were notorious. But it was the heyday of a new species of speculation, which once entered on by the community at large, it seemed impossible to arrest half-way. In Ireland it was still open for consideration, whether upon national grounds, and for the general good, converging lines connecting each province with the capital, and having branches more or less numerous which would bring all the secondary towns within a general system, might not be marked out by some impartial and competent authority ; instead of

leaving the most profitable portions to be seized on for private advantage while the poorer and remoter regions were left untapped in their helpless stagnation: When engaged in the Ordnance Survey, Drummond had studied with the perspicacity of a statesman the physical and moral condition of widely estranged districts; and he had come to the conviction that, having true regard to the peace and welfare of the empire, very different maxims ought to be followed in a country so full of the painful anomalies of misrule from those deemed adequate for the development of new modes of transit in peaceful and affluent Britain. *Laissez faire* in the supersession of great highways and their reappropriation by private companies might one way or other be made to do on the eastern side of the Channel, where all investments were secure and capital was superabundant. But on the western side, where neither of these conditions existed, it seemed to him mere pharisaical prudery to insist upon adherence to a like rule. Through the wealthier counties, railways by dint of stock-jobbing and local bribery might gradually be made; but to leave the remaining two-thirds of the island to their own resources was plainly to doom them for generations to a new species of exclusion from common benefits, and to throw away an unprecedented opportunity for unifying and assimilating long-segregating and greatly differing communities. He believed, moreover, that were a general impulse promptly given by Government to industrial development simultaneously throughout the country, headway would be made in favour of order, and a great step would be taken towards encouraging the growth of the social element of all others the most needed; namely, an industrious middle class. Several continental states, warned by the spectacle of what was taking place in England, had begun to adopt the synthetic in preference to the experimental method; and the energetic Under-Secretary had so far succeeded in winning over the leading members of the Cabinet to his views, that in 1836 an address to the Crown was carried by Lord Lansdowne to appoint a royal Commission of inquiry into the best mode of forming railways in Ireland. Its members were, Colonel (afterwards F.M. Sir John) Burgoyne, Professor Barlow of Woolwich, Mr. Richard Griffith the well-known geologist, and Mr. Drummond. With the aid of the best men engaged in the Trigonometrical Survey, they succeeded in less than two years in producing an elaborate and exhaustive report upon the industrial wants and capabilities of the country, accompanied with alternative schemes for the simultaneous creation of iron roads in different directions on easy and economical terms; a common feature in the varied proposals being Government advances at 4 per cent., repayable out of earnings, and in default, by a local charge on the counties intersected, according to the degree of benefit derived respectively. Irishmen of all parties concurred in applauding the recommendations of the Report, and in petitioning Parliament to adopt them. But when Lord Morpeth moved in committee of the whole House for a loan of £2,500,000 to commence the operations in South Leinster and Munster, Sir Robert Peel denounced

the project as unsound in principle, vicious in detail, and likely to prove perilous as an example. Wherever railways would pay, they were certain to be made; wherever they would not prove remunerative, they ought not to be constructed. Community in profit and loss was a philanthropic phantom; and making up for lost time in the life of a nation was a fantastic dream. Want of access to the great markets of the empire might be the cause of want of development in agriculture, mining, fisheries, and trade; and want of employment might be a main cause of insecurity and disaffection; but the credit of an opulent state ought not to be pledged to try bold experiments for the redemption of dangerous poverty: and all matters of this kind must be left to find their own level. The economists cheered Sir Robert's blighting anathema, which amounted in fact to the wisdom and justice of wishing strength to the strong, wealth to those who were already well off, the prizes of fortune to such as could snatch them, and in the words of Carlyle, "devil take the hindmost!" Melbourne was no enthusiast—no sanguine believer in the art of precipitating popular regeneration; but he read with generous anger and scorn this mode of paltering with the long arrears due in account between the two countries; and he thought less than ever of his chief competitor for power, whom the nemesis of short-sighted parsimony overtook in due time.¹

Early in the previous year Mr. Abercromby had intimated his intention of resigning the Speakership, feeling that he no longer possessed the degree of ministerial confidence which in his view was indispensable for the due conduct of public business and the maintenance of the authority of the Chair. A correspondence ensued, in which Melbourne's part, as he himself described it, was "to soften him towards John Russell, and to induce him to forgive any irritating expressions which he (John) might have used in his correspondence. He wrote me a very kind letter, thanking me for the tone and temper of mine. I thought that this was an observation upon the different style of John Russell's letter, and all I said was that as to tone and temper, it was very easy for a person to be cool who had not been engaged in the disputes which occasioned a difference between them."² Although not wholly satisfied, the Speaker consented to retain his position during that and the following session, at the end of which he withdrew from a position he had never coveted, and in which he was never perhaps thoroughly at ease.

While the issue of the struggle on the Jamaica Bill was pending, a scene occurred in the House of great irregularity and disorder, which the Speaker was unable to control. His self-love refused to admit the

¹ See the unavailing proposal of Sir Robert Peel in 1849, that Government should undertake the entire reconstruction of society and a new plantation of whole regions in Ireland, desolated by famine notwithstanding the unproductive expenditure of double the sum, which as a loan would have given Ireland betimes a cheap and comprehensive system of railways.

² From Windsor Castle, January 8th, 1838.

failure to be owing to his own want of presidential weight with the refractory Assembly. He chose to lay the blame rather on the leader of the House and his friends in the Government, whom he reproached not for the first time of having neglected to sustain his authority in the chair ; and on the 30th of April he acquainted Lord Russell of his fixed resolution to resign. Spring Rice believed that his favourite aim in political life was at length within his reach, and wrote to the head of the Government reminding him that :—

“ On three former occasions, in deference to the wishes of others, and to what were considered the interests or the convenience of the party, he had abandoned his own views without objection or complaint ; and that Lord Russell, in December 1837, had stated that he should consider himself bound to attend to his wishes, which he had so handsomely put aside on the last occasion. These circumstances were known at the time to the Cabinet ; and he now claimed the fulfilment of what he deemed a binding pledge.”

Melbourne *more suo* replied,—“ The opinion is, that if you continue to wish it you shall be our candidate for the Chair.”

Verbally and in writing many of the most influential members of the party intimated their readiness to secure his success. But he had contrived to alienate several leading Radicals, who were, moreover, at the time out of humour with the Government in its opposition to the Ballot and its hesitation to adopt the plan of penny postage : and the blame of the latter lay inevitably at the door of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Conservatives put forward Sir George Clark as a rival candidate, and more than one attached friend warned Rice how numerous the defaulters would be below the gangway on his side. Mr. Bannerman wrote that it was quite evident the object in view could not be accomplished, and that to attempt it would only give a triumph to Opposition ; when asked his opinion Mr. W. H. Ward declared that there were at least sixty who would not vote for him.¹

When Abercromby consented to retain the position of Speaker at the beginning of 1838 at the urgent desire of the Premier, it was agreed that a select committee should be appointed to consider the whole question of procedure with reference to local and general legislation, and that his suggestions for its amendment should be fully submitted for consideration. Some of the most experienced and influential members on either side consented to serve upon it, and Mr. Charles Shaw Lefevre was chosen Chairman. In the main his views coincided with those of the Speaker ; and owing in a great measure to the sedulous pains taken by him to make clear by anticipation what the working of the reformed system would be, and the exercise of his powers of individual suasion, he succeeded in carrying a report almost unanimously in the committee, and which embodied well-nigh all the recommendations of the Speaker.

These were great and substantial improvements, the benefit of which

¹ Letter from Rowland Alston, M.P. for Herts, May 9th, 1839.

we feel at this day ; and being adopted by the House, it might have been expected that the over-susceptibility of their author would have been soothed, and that he would have contentedly reposed in the satisfaction of having performed his duty. But an exacting disposition is as unhappy in stinted praise as in utter want of recognition. The new rules and orders passed as easily as if there could not have been two opinions on the subject. Abercromby felt jealous of what he termed the cold and matter-of-course tone in which the affair was concluded, and once more informed Lord John Russell that he was weary of a post in which he felt he was not appreciated : and that he was determined to retire.

"I was brought (says one who knew him well, and cherished for him genuine regard) into frequent contact with the Speaker, who was of that unhappy temperament that he was too apt to take a gloomy view of everything, and of a nature so sensitive that he frequently complained to me of the want of support which he received both from the Government and the House : a great deal of which was purely imaginary. I attributed this in some measure to the state of his health, which was not sufficiently good to enable him to bear the great fatigues of his office, especially at the age of sixty and upwards. But this infirmity, and his want of confidence in the support which the Government were disposed to afford him, led to his resignation. I never was more surprised in my life than when, standing behind the chair, I heard the announcement."

Of the Speaker's intention very few up to that moment were aware. Spontaneously many men of judgment and weight tendered their support to the member for Hampshire, if he would allow himself to be put in nomination as his successor. Ministers were pledged to Spring Rice, and naturally deprecated a division in the ranks of their party ; but after some days it grew evident that a considerable section of the Radicals, led by Hume and O'Connell, would not support him, and he consequently relinquished, though not without regret, what had been so long the aim of his ambition. Meanwhile Lord Stanley wrote in reply to a letter asking his intentions :—

"I have this moment received your friendly communication of your views and intentions, and I hasten to reply to it before conferring on the subject with any one ; at the same time you have relieved me from much embarrassment by requesting that your letter may be made known to Sir Robert Peel. I should not have felt myself at liberty to receive such a communication on a political subject without naming it to him, and yet I should have been unwilling to violate your confidence. But your course has set me free, and at the same time that I am enabled to place your letter in his hands, I reply to it at once, because I have no right to compromise him in my answer even indirectly. I should, as you well know, have sincerely rejoiced had you been offered as a candidate for the Chair in 1835, because I should then have had no difficulty in at once gratifying my personal feelings and giving effect to my political opinions. At that time you and I had not

widely diverged, nor indeed differed, except on one point when you had endeavoured to maintain a position nearer to mine than most of your supporters, but which I felt to be untenable. But on the same grounds I own I regret to hear that you are coming forward now. Fresh alliances have been formed by both of us, and as you candidly and kindly admit 'new obligations and duties have been imposed on me.' Entertaining still my old feelings of personal regard, I cannot but look on the election of a Speaker as a party question. It was studiously so made by your party, then in opposition, in 1835. On the strength of it Abercromby's successor is selected from the Cabinet by the Administration; it becomes almost inevitably an expression of opinion, not on the merits of the individual, nor even his individual political views; but on the political system, as a whole, of the Cabinet of which he is a member. That system as pursued since 1835, I consider vicious in principle, and dangerous from the combination by which it is supported; and on a question thus raised, as I fear it must be, I can, politically speaking, take but one course, and that one at variance with my private feelings of regard for you. More I cannot say; there are, as you know, Cabinets out of office as well as in, and never is the member of either a perfectly unfettered agent (nor ought he to be): nor is too open a communication between those on opposite sides free from serious objections. My course, however, individually is in my judgment quite clear. In a trial of strength between opposing parties, I must give my vote against the representative of the Cabinet to which I am opposed. I am not insensible to the advantage, if possible, of a concurrence of parties in the choice of a Speaker, for the purpose of giving greater weight to his authority in times when it is much required; but I must frankly say I do not think such a concurrence possible; and if there be a contest I must, though with reluctance, and that reluctance increased by the friendly tone of your letter, support the claims of a Conservative candidate. I am sure that you will understand and appreciate the grounds on which I form my decision, and will not the less believe me to be, with my sincere regard, etc." ¹

Finally Lord John, on the 8th of May, after a consultation with Melbourne, wrote saying:—

"We are of opinion that your being proposed for the Chair would only lead to disappointment on your part, and cause embarrassment to the party. I say this with great regret, knowing how much your own wishes were directed to this object, and feeling that you are in every way qualified to preside over our debates. At the same time, I think it but natural that a Chancellor of the Exchequer should have made opponents (by pursuing the strict line of his duty), who would have felt no such objection to the individual had his own personal merits been alone in question.

"Yours very truly,
"J. R."

¹ Lord Stanley to T. S. Rice, from St. James's Square, May 5th, 1839, MS.

It was resolved to nominate Mr. Lefevre instead ; and then letters came from colleagues and others, as if in ignorance of the decision, offering support full of confidence and good-will. Here is a specimen written the day after, by one likely to have been thoroughly cognisant of all that was going on :—

“The answer I four years ago found it necessary to send your note about the Speakership has always weighed on my conscience, though I think the decision was, upon the whole, the best which then could have been come to. It is saying nothing to say I shall vote for you, as you know the Government of course vote together, but I cannot resist telling you how sincerely glad I shall be if ever so (little) I can contribute to placing you where you wish to be, and where being placed I think you will very ably discharge the arduous duties of the situation.”

Several influential Conservatives, learning how the case stood, evinced a willingness to accept Mr. Lefevre as an independent candidate ; and thus it came to pass that without a competitor, and solely upon the ground of fitness and merit, the lot fell upon him. By this time, however, events had occurred in the absorbing interest of which the affair of the Speakership was for some time forgotten.

On the morning of Tuesday, the 7th of May, ministers found themselves in a majority of only five in a full House on the bill which proposed to suspend the Legislative Assembly of Jamaica, and at the Cabinet held in the afternoon they agreed unanimously that it was their duty to resign. No doubt had been expressed by the leaders of Opposition that total change of the powers and forms of rule had been rendered necessary by the conduct of the Planter oligarchy in the island, who still retained exclusive privileges and franchises ; and who hardly veiled their fatuous hope of being able, by dogged resistance to the will of Parliament, practically to defeat the policy of Negro Emancipation. In point of principle, as was subsequently proved, there was little difference between the two great parties in Parliament ; but in the striving for ascendancy the Jamaica question had become a portion of the battle-ground, like almost every other of importance. Mr. Labouchere's bill was severely criticised as needlessly raising constitutional doubts regarding the manner in which imperial control ought to be asserted over a contumacious dependency. Ministers had lost several seats since the general election of 1837 ; and their weakness in division was the chief fault assigned in debate. So long as no grave measure of organic change was in dispute a nearly balanced condition of parties might continue ; but on a measure for suspending the constitution in a great colony, and for temporarily administering all the functions of Government by the direct authority of the Crown, it would have been unseemly to retain their places by a merely nominal majority in the House of Commons. The Premier therefore waited on the Queen, and unconditionally resigned, recommending her Majesty to send for the Duke of Wellington. With many expressions of regret at losing his services, the Sovereign prepared at once to act on

his advice. The incidents that followed are well known. The Duke submitted his reasons for thinking that a Conservative Premier ought to be in the Lower House, and named Sir Robert Peel, who presented a list of persons qualified to undertake the duties of the various departments, to none of whom any exception was taken. But on his asking permission to submit the names of the ladies qualified to constitute the household, the youthful Queen naturally manifested surprise and concern at a proposal that seemed to deprive her suddenly of the friends of her youth by whom she had hitherto been surrounded. Sir Robert was disconcerted by the intimation which he took to imply unwillingness to remove any of the ladies of the bed-chamber; and took counsel with the Duke of Wellington. Lord John meantime was sent for and requested to state whether the objection raised by the Sovereign was within her constitutional discretion. He replied in the affirmative; but thought that the Cabinet should be called upon to advise collectively upon the course to be taken. After full deliberation a minute was adopted to the following effect:—

“The Queen having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir R. Peel, to remove the ladies of her bed-chamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings.”

The old ministers thereby took upon them, as it was their duty to do, the full responsibility of the proceeding, and resolved to abide the judgment of Parliament.

The truth seems to be that on both sides there was a misunderstanding, due possibly to warmth of feeling. Her Majesty was strongly attached to the people about her, and imagined that the new Minister wanted to get rid of them all. He, on the other hand, did not wish that the wives and sisters of the out-going cabinet ministers should remain about her Majesty's person, and did not make it very clear to what extent he desired the changes to go. No adequate explanations took place. If they had, the difficulties might possibly have been removed. But her Majesty, under the impression that Peel wished to exclude from her daily presence the ladies whom hitherto she had best known, appealed to the fidelity of Melbourne and his colleagues to sustain her in the unprompted resolution she had expressed. Before a like exigency could recur care was taken to come to an understanding; and ever since, coincidence of political opinion has ceased to be considered essential in the selection of the ladies of the royal household, except regarding the Mistress of the Robes, who is always of the party in office. With the acquiescence of both Houses, the Whigs resumed office, which they retained for two years longer.

On the morning of the day fixed by Lord Brougham for taking into consideration the late ministerial crisis the Duke wrote to the Premier:—

“I have seen your Lordship's note to Sir Robert Peel of yesterday. You are probably not aware that Lord Brougham had intended to bring under discussion on Friday the subject of the attempt to form an

Administration. I prevailed upon him in the House of Lords to forego this intention. But I think it probable; indeed he said he would bring the subject forward on this day. I feel no desire to reveal, indeed I could not reveal, the conversation with which her Majesty honoured me. It did not relate to any details in respect to the formation of the Administration; but more to general principles. I do not therefore ask for permission to relate anything. But as the colleague of Sir Robert Peel, it may be necessary for me to state his case as it appears in the correspondence to which her Majesty has permitted him to refer; and I apprise your Lordship that this may be the case, in order that you may have with you copies of the papers, in case you should find it necessary to make any observations."¹

The reply is dated the same day:—

"I beg leave to acknowledge your Grace's letter of this morning. I had heard the circumstances which your Grace states respecting Lord Brougham's intentions on Friday last, but not from any certain authority. I beg to return your Grace my best thanks for your communication. The permission to state the case, and for that purpose to employ the correspondence, which I have been commanded by her Majesty to signify to Sir Robert Peel, is of course extended to your Grace."²

Melbourne narrated with precision, in the Lords, all that had occurred, and justified his conduct and the counsel he had given:—

"Entirely agreeing with the opinion laid down by her Majesty that it is not expedient to apply the principle which Sir R. Peel would apply, and which there is no objection made to his applying, to other parts of the Household, I so completely concurred, for reasons into which I abstain from entering at present, with her Majesty, that it is inexpedient to apply that principle to the ladies of her Majesty's bed-chamber, and to remove them, or any part of them, on every change of Administration, that we felt ourselves bound as men and as ministers to come to the determination to support and maintain the Sovereign on the present occasion. I know very well that on coming to this determination and conclusion, all my colleagues, and still more that I will be exposed to all kinds of insinuation and obloquy. I know that we expose ourselves to the charge of intrigue, to the charge of personal considerations, to the imputation of a preconcerted plan, to the insinuation of having beforehand settled this objection to render abortive any attempt to form another Administration. I know very well that there are situations in which a man must expose himself to those calumnies. I do not expect that they will be made against us here, as they do not appear to be made against us in the other House of Parliament; but they have been made against us in other quarters of considerable weight and influence, and therefore I cannot allow them to pass altogether unnoticed and uncontradicted. It is a bad thing

¹ From Apsley House, May 13th, 1839.

² From South Street, May 13th, 1839.

to have nothing to oppose to charges and imputations of this kind, but one's own mere personal assertion. But when I parted with her Majesty on the morning of Wednesday last, I thought it my duty to tender such advice as I gave her with respect to the persons to whom she ought to apply, and to the course which it was incumbent on her to follow. I thought it, I say, my duty to tender such advice to her Majesty, considering the novelty and difficulty in which she was placed. But I most distinctly assure your Lordships, not using any asseverations or protestations; for mere asseverations and protestations might possibly produce on the minds of your Lordships the same effect which they would produce on mine, and might rather induce a doubt of the veracity of the party using them. But I most distinctly assure you, that as to the ladies of the household I gave her Majesty no advice whatever; for I fairly declare to you, my Lords, that I did not expect, that I did not anticipate, I could not conceive that this proposition could be made. There are many reasons why this proposition should not be made to her Majesty. They are so obvious that I need not particularise them. I say nothing of the prudence, nothing of the policy, nothing of the expediency of such a proposal. It is not for me to instruct the noble Duke opposite, nor the right hon. Baronet who holds so distinguished a situation in the other House of Parliament, nor the noblemen and gentlemen usually acting with them, who have greater experience than I have in the practical conduct of affairs. I have had, however, some experience, too; and from the construction of the court of our late revered Sovereign, and from the relations that existed between him and his ministers, I have some experience to bring to bear on this matter; and I can assure your Lordships that those personal matters, those strokes of force, are never worth while. They give a tone and character at the commencement of a career which cannot be productive of good. They produce a feeling of irritation and alienation, which is ten times worse than the evil which they are intended to obviate. From some experience, I publish this as my opinion to the world. I know where the difficulty lies, I do not mean to deny that there might be some suspicion felt among the supporters of the noble Duke, as I know by experience was felt among my own. But the experience I have had leads me to the conclusion that those inconveniences, imaginary as they sometimes are, and exaggerated as they always are, are nothing as compared with the inconveniences generated by the sort of force adopted here. As there has been no angry feeling exhibited on the present occasion, I abstain from further argument on this part of the case. My Lords, there are many accusations—unfortunately the most usual and general—to which I am exceedingly callous. There are some accusations, however, which I feel deeply. I am insensible, for instance, to all observations respecting tenacity of office and desire of place, and to any imputation of being actuated by motives either of ambition or of avarice. I do not deny these accusations, because I care little about them, but I should be exceedingly sorry if I could be accused with

justice of running from my post on account of the dangers and difficulties of the country, or of abandoning any party in it by whom I had been encouraged and sustained. I own that I have a strong feeling on that subject, and I should indeed be sorry if that reproach were cast upon me with any show of justice. I resigned my office, not because I was abandoned—no, I will not use that harsh expression—by those who usually supported me, but because there had arisen among them a certain amount of doubt, which led me to suppose that I could not any longer conduct the Government either with honour to myself, or with advantage to the country ; and I now frankly declare, that I resume office solely because I will not abandon my Sovereign in a situation of difficulty and distress, when demands are made on her with which she ought not to comply—demands which are inconsistent with her sense of honour, and which, if acquiesced in now, would establish a precedent which would render her liable during the remainder of her reign to all the variations of party politics, and would make her domestic life one continued scene of discomfort and unhappiness.”

The occasion was too provoking to Lord Brougham’s appetite for sarcasm not to be availed of ; but the illustrious soldier who led the Opposition in the Peers disdained to sanction angry comment or the expression of any feeling of disappointment ; and no vote of disapproval was proposed. In the Commons Sir R. Peel explained at great length the part he had taken, and the motives which had actuated him. He did not conceal his sense of relief from being compelled to undertake the Government under circumstances so embarrassing ; and he went out of his way to avow that his great difficulty would have been Ireland. The Home Secretary boldly defended the advice he had personally given the Queen ; and no attempt was made to challenge by a division, even in a House so nearly balanced, the accuracy of his historical appeal to the usage of former reigns. As a matter of party tactics he has since owned that it would have been better had he and his colleagues quitted office in May 1839 instead of waiting till their ranks had been further weakened and their prestige of legislative efficiency lost. But the best answer to the imputation of having acted contrary to the spirit of the constitution lies in the conclusive fact that in neither chamber of the Legislature did any one of mark or influence even propose to put the question to the vote.

A suitable opening did not arise for Macaulay’s re-entering Parliament until Mr. Abercromby resigned his office for a pension and a peerage, when he was unanimously chosen his successor as representative of Edinburgh. His speech on the hustings had in it an eastern glow of enthusiasm for the good old cause, which disenchanted Radicals and dyspeptic Whigs were not just then accustomed to :—

“ I look with pride on all that the Whigs have done for human freedom and for human happiness. I see them now hard pressed, struggling with difficulties, but still fighting the good fight. At their head I see men who have inherited the spirit and the virtues, as well

as the blood, of old champions and martyrs of freedom. To those men I propose to attach myself. While one shred of the old banner is flying, by that banner will I, at least, be found. Whether in or out of Parliament, whether speaking with that authority which must always belong to the representative of this great and enlightened community, or expressing the humble sentiments of a private citizen, I will to the last maintain inviolate my fidelity to principles which, though they may be borne down for a time by senseless clamour, are yet strong with the strength, and immortal with the immortality, of truth ; and which, however they may be misunderstood or misrepresented by contemporaries, will assuredly find justice from a better age."

The restored Administration were resolved to justify their new lease of life. Measures heretofore thought too bold were reconsidered and determined on. Postal reform, though previously commended by a great combination of interests to their attention, had been deferred, not from any doubt of its expediency or popularity, but solely because the revenue had recently fallen short of the expenditure, and the Treasury hesitated until fiscal times should mend to try an experiment that even its sanguine and sagacious author did not venture to say could be made without a certain risk of temporary loss. The net receipts from the Post Office were confessedly declining ; and notwithstanding the increase in population and trade, were actually less than they had been twenty years before. Mr. Rowland Hill calculated that a uniform penny postage would at first still further reduce the Government receipts by 20 per cent. ; but he confidently reckoned on a rapid and steady recovery, and incontrovertibly demonstrated the augmented gain that would eventually accrue to the Exchequer. The commercial benefits and social blessings of cheapened communication admitted of no dispute : the only doubt in the minds of the First and Second Lords of the Treasury was whether Parliament would hold them justified, in face of an estimated deficiency for the year of £860,000, in sacrificing £280,000 more ; but after the events that had lately occurred, they felt relieved at least from one responsibility, namely, that of hazarding the immediate existence of the Government : and Melbourne agreed with Spring Rice that no selfish consideration aforethought of what might happen, or what might be said of them by their political rivals next year, ought to prevent them giving the nation the advantages of so great a boon. On the 5th of July the Chancellor of the Exchequer accordingly presented to the House of Commons for adoption the plan of a uniform penny postage. To prepare the way for so great a change, he proposed that till the 1st of January following there should be an uniform charge of fourpence ; but thenceforward that, except on late letters, the highest rate should be one penny. Mr. Goulburn moved a resolution deprecating the measure as improvident and rash ; and found supporters in Sir R. Peel, Sir J. Graham, Lord Stanley, Sir R. Inglis, Lord Lincoln, Sir J. Pakington, and Mr. Sidney Herbert. Upon a division their objections were overruled by 213 to 113 ; subsequent efforts to retard the progress of the bill proved ineffectual ;

and Melbourne, who had awakened to a strong sense of the importance and worth of the project, and who took charge of the measure himself in the Upper House, had the satisfaction of carrying it through all its stages there without any serious difficulty.

Mr. Hill was appointed to superintend the working of the new system ; many difficulties in the way of fully developing which had to be encountered. For a few years there was a very considerable loss to the revenue ; and when parties changed he was summarily dismissed : but after some time the department were glad to have him recalled. And now after eight-and-thirty years, what has been the result ! In 1839 the number of letters transmitted by post in the United Kingdom was 76,000,000 ; in the first year of reduced charge it had risen to 169,000,000 ; in the seventh year (the last whose ever increasing crop of benefits Melbourne was permitted to see) it had grown to 260,000,000 ; in 1876 it amounted to 1,019,000,000, besides 87,000,000 of post cards, and 280,000,000 of book packets and newspapers. It is true that population and wealth and facilities of transit had greatly increased in the thirty-six years' interval ; but, making every allowance for these, the change brought about by lowering the rates of postal charge transcends in extent, degree, universality and value, every other fiscal reform of our time.¹

Compared with other improvements tending to redress the inequality of conditions, this was ineffably the most democratic, and yet the freest from even the temporary reproach of being accomplished in favour of the many at the cost of the few. The luxury of frequent correspondence was cheapened to the rich by the same Act that made the comfort of occasional correspondence accessible for the first time to the poor. The more recent device of postal cards has doubtless proved a further benefit to them ; but it is not too much to say that the latter was the offspring of the maturity of the former, and that the halfpenny card was begotten by the penny stamp.

The Queen had often urged her minister to introduce some measure for primary education in England. He knew too well how firmly rooted were the jealousies and fears throughout the community that were certain to form hindrances at every step in the way of legislation. The hostility of the bishops he had grown used to, and the invectives of his temporal critics he did not mind ; but with a dwindling majority in the Commons, where the money must be voted, he shrank from proposing a comprehensive scheme of popular instruction ; and it was not until after his recall to the head of affairs that he thought it prudent or possible to make a beginning in the great work by which her Majesty had told him she had set her heart upon having her reign remembered. Lansdowne undertook as President of the Council to administer the grants which Parliament might vote in aid of existing schools ; and the Home Secretary in a cautious and temperate speech induced the House to appropriate £30,000 a year for the purpose.

¹ Report of the Postmaster-General, 1876.

How quickly the seed thus planted struck root in the nation's heart, and how silently but steadily it throve and grew until in our day its branches overshadow all the land,—but one of all the ministers of 1839 lived to see.

At the Cabinet of the 15th of June, Palmerston proposed that the French and English squadrons should sail to the Syrian coast instructed to stay hostilities between the Pasha of Egypt and the Porte. He further proposed that the four Great Powers should insist upon the evacuation of Syria by the Egyptians, and that the Pashalic should be declared hereditary in the family of Mehemet Ali. He urged on the Cabinet that the Sultan would not refuse; and that if the Powers were agreed the Pasha might be forced to comply. But when it was proposed to other Governments, Russia refused to forego her right of independent action secured to her by the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi: and if any Christian Power was to fight for the Porte, she would be that Power. She would not tolerate Austrian troops being sent to Syria. Hobhouse backed Palmerston's views, and proposed to seize the Pasha's fleet and send it to Malta in case he resisted the allied Powers. But this was objected to as too arbitrary; though he was already threatening Bassora, if not Bagdad. It was agreed that England should invite the co-operation of France, Austria, and Russia, and that the Admiral in the Levant should hold himself in readiness to sail with the French fleet to the coast of Syria.

As compensation to Spring Rice for his late disappointment, a peerage was conferred upon him with the Comptrollership of the Exchequer recently vacant. It was an office which, under the title of Auditor, had long been considered as in the special gift of the Premier, either as one of dignified retirement from party action without quitting public life, or as a means of providing for a relative or friend. Mr. Perceval had bestowed it on his brother, and Lord Grenville had taken it himself. To the second place at the Board of Treasury, Melbourne proposed to promote the Financial Secretary, Mr. Francis Baring. Lansdowne and Russell concurred fully in the fitness of these arrangements: Lord Howick alone objected, and intimated his intention to retire if the Comptrollership were thus disposed of. Spring Rice saw no reason to waive a third time claims which the chiefs of his party had repeatedly declared to be paramount, on the score of long and varied public service. The Premier laid the whole of the circumstances before the Queen. He could not recommend that in deference to objections raised by one member of the Cabinet, which others did not share, the interests of a friend and colleague so long relied on should be sacrificed. The appointment was made accordingly, and Spring Rice was created Lord Monteagle.¹

It soon became evident that the new Secretary of State was unequal

¹ The circumstances were mentioned by Lord Russell to several of his friends, after his renouncing the attempt to form an Administration in December, 1845. Letter from Lord Monteagle to Lord Lansdowne, December 22nd, 1845.

to the task of directing the difficult and diversified affairs of a vast colonial empire. He had neither the knowledge requisite nor the industry to acquire it, the calmness of judgment nor the comprehensiveness of view :—

“I never found myself in a greater difficulty than about these arrangements. The Colonial Office forms it principally. It is so hard, nay, almost impossible to compose it so as to be equal to its duties or to command confidence. Normanby prefers to have Ward for Secretary. To this the greatest objection is felt by many, and upon the whole I do not see any mode of arranging the affair except by acceding to John Russell's views, placing him at the Colonial Office and Normanby at the Home. I see the objections to Ward, but they are not so strong as to the other course. They are objections of feeling and prejudice, whereas the firm and effective management of the Colonies is vital to the interests of the empire.”¹

Matters did not mend in Downing Street, and it was impossible to leave Canada, Jamaica, South Africa, and the Ionian Islands to the desultory attention of a mere man of fashion. The President of the Council was abroad when the following reached him :—

“I think by this time you will have received the letters which I wrote to you some time ago, respecting the interchange of offices between Normanby and John Russell, which was yesterday carried into effect, and as far as I can collect or observe excites less disapprobation than I had expected. The wisdom of John's going to the Colonial Office is generally admitted, and with respect to the other, whatever may be thought, it is not easy to argue that a man is fit to be Secretary of State for one department and not for the other. Normanby will have a difficult task in the renewal of the Poor Law Act, and in carrying into effect the Irish poor law, but we must keep him up and assist him to the best of our power. This change, however, with other causes of discontent, has led to the resignation of Howick under the strong advice and persuasion of Lord Grey, and his resignation has been followed very reluctantly, and more upon private than upon public grounds, by that of Charles Wood. Sir George Grey, too, although he will retain his office, is unwilling under these new circumstances to enter the Cabinet ; and the Chancellor upon reconsideration has some doubts (they appear to me to be faint ones) of the propriety of placing the Judge Advocate in the Cabinet. Under these circumstances it appears to John Russell and me, and also, I believe, to all the rest of us who are here, that the best course for filling up the vacant offices and obtaining strength is to offer Macaulay to be Secretary at War with a seat in the Cabinet, and Clarendon the Privy Seal. We did not like, however, to take so important a step without your knowledge and approbation, and therefore we have despatched a special messenger to you in order that we may receive your answer before we proceed further in the business. Both Macaulay and Clarendon would be very

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, August 19th, 1839. MS.

great acquisitions. They would strengthen us greatly where we are weakest, and I have no doubt myself that we can do no better. With respect to minor arrangements, Vernon Smith goes to the Colonial Department, Moore O'Farrell to the Admiralty, Robert Gordon to the Treasury, the seats at the India Board we have not yet filled up. When you left us you must have expected changes, and it appears to me that we shall be well off if they go no further than they have gone. We have dreadfully heavy and continued rains at a period of the harvest not much beyond the middle of it ; even in these counties much corn is still exposed here, and all is so in the north : this is fearful.”¹

To make room for Clarendon, Duncannon intimated his willingness to relinquish the Privy Seal, which he had held since April, 1835, along with the Chief Commissionership of Woods and Forests : the latter he retained. Morpeth was rewarded for his services in Ireland, and the new President of the Board of Trade (Labouchere) for the ability he had manifested in the trying controversies regarding colonial affairs, by admission to the Cabinet. Sheil became Vice-President with the rank of Privy Councillor, a distinction with which he was particularly pleased. Most of the new promotions were of men who supported the Ballot, at that time a nominal rather than real line of distinction between the more and the less advanced sections of the party. Those who knew the real sentiments of the men laughed at the fear of progress being too much accelerated by them ; and the Premier was not to be deterred from widening the gates of promotion by imputations which he well knew to be groundless. The ministerial leader in the Commons, with characteristic courage, undertook the most arduous post in the Government, namely, that of Minister for Colonial Affairs. Except by Huskisson for a few months, it had not previously been held by any one on whom the general management of business in the Lower House devolved ; and there were not wanting cautious friends of judgment and experience who, looking at the troubled state of Canada and the West Indies, and the difficulties beginning to be felt in remoter dependencies of the empire, would have dissuaded Lord John from making the exchange.² He did not himself, however, fear the augmented responsibility and labour ; and his chief had a thorough confidence that what he undertook he would fulfil.

On his arrival in town in September, Macaulay found a letter from the Premier offering him the Secretaryship at War, with a seat in the Cabinet. It was the consummation of the darling hope of his political life, and he affected no hesitation in his reply, his only stipulation being that he should be free to vote as heretofore for the Ballot. The office still remained what it had been when filled by Palmerston from 1808 to 1828, one of secondary rank, its duties being chiefly those connected with military finance and commissariat. The direction and disposal of the Army lay with the Secretary of State for War and the

¹ September 8th, 1839. ² Letter from Lord Monteagle, August 30th, 1839. MS.

Colonies, who in organising movements of importance was bound to consult the Premier; in continental expeditions, the Minister for Foreign Affairs; and where India was concerned, the President of the Board of Control; but who on more than one memorable occasion did not think it necessary to confer with the rest of his colleagues. The brilliant orator and essayist had neither the pretension nor ambition to aspire to power of this description, power which in truth can only be exercised beneficially to the public by a man possessing administrative talents in an eminent degree. To these Macaulay had no claim, and his pride was fully satisfied by being invited to join the confidential council of the Crown before he attained his fortieth year, without family connection, the repute of opulence, or the possession of landed estate. What Burke and Sheridan, Francis and Mackintosh had sighed and laboured for in vain was spontaneously accorded him as a man of letters, whom the great constituencies of Leeds and Edinburgh had chosen for their representative. No doubt the minister desired to strengthen his resources in debate; no doubt the personal friendship of Russell and Spring Rice, still more of Lansdowne, contributed to Macaulay's elevation. But the credit is due to Melbourne of being the first Premier since the death of Stanhope who opened the doors of the Cabinet to one who was simply and merely a man of letters. To mark, if possible, more emphatically the practical change which had come over the administrative spirit of the time, Sheil and Macaulay were sworn members of the Privy Council on the same day. As the guest of her Majesty, Macaulay, unfortunately for his reputation, had the folly to date his address to his constituents for re-election, from Windsor Castle. Even after the lapse of years, it seems almost incredible how a critic so wise and a constitutionalist so punctilious should have been betrayed into such an error in point of taste, self-respect, and representative independence. The penalty he endured from the lash of public ridicule was indeed severe. Party opponents revelled in the opportunity to jest and jibe, and his truest friends were those who felt most keenly his mistake.

Melbourne's unbelief in the prognostics commonly held forth by eager politicians was in private frequently expressed. "Our ablest men," he used to say, "or at least our ablest in debate, seem to be the most stunted by nature in the quality of foresight. Look at what has occurred with respect to the Catholic question: what all the clever men, Whigs and Tories, foretold as the consequences of emancipation has been falsified, and religious rancour influences party politics nearly as much as it did before." Yet nobody could explain with more caustic force and point how the tranquillising effects hoped for from emancipation had been baffled by its long delay. He loved paradox, and found infinite amusement in startling orthodox convictions from what he used to call their unsafe roost. His amazement was often unaffected at the confidence, real or rhetorical, professed by those about him in the effects of measures debated long in council, and at last adopted only on a balance of conflicting considerations.

The Cabinet of 1835 consisted of twelve members only ; when reconstructed in September, 1839, it contained fifteen ; the holders of the Great Seal, the Privy Seal, and the Irish Secretaryship furnishing the additional number.

The political article in the autumn number of the *Edinburgh*, by Sir E. Lytton Bulwer, defended the measures of the session as cordially as they were condemned in the *Quarterly*, which counselled bolder tactics to the Opposition, and warned Sir Robert Peel that he might one day be displaced by a more energetic leader. The new postal law had the honour of a separate invective to itself, in which Mr. Croker confidently foretold its speedy and complete failure with the vehemence that was his wont. The ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer knew better what to anticipate from the change, and thought the attacks upon his late colleagues "furious and weak." He was much more concerned at the prospect of an insufficient corn harvest than the continued drain of gold from the Bank.¹ The article in the *Edinburgh* on the first Government grant for education in England was written by him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MARRIAGE OF THE QUEEN.

Questions of precedence—Clarendon and Macaulay—Death of Drummond—Lord Stanley's Registration Bill—Syrian Question—Thirlwall a Bishop.

THE most delicate yet least difficult of duties now devolved upon the minister,—to advise regarding the marriage of the Queen. By his conduct in this supreme concern his great but not his only rival in personal influence at Court had always felt that the genuineness of his devotion would be most truly tested and ought to be historically judged. If from individual or party motives Melbourne desired to postpone a decision on which the happiness of the Sovereign and the welfare of the nation must so greatly depend, the Duke of Wellington believed that he might easily have found reasons specious, if not unanswerable, for such counsel. Her Majesty was still very young, and might not be prepared without further time for consideration to make an irrevocable choice. Even were it made, and confidentially communicated to her family and chief adviser, pretexts innumerable might doubtless be assigned for deprecation or delay. It was impossible, from the peculiar nature of the case, that the position of the minister should not be essentially changed from the day that the royal confidence was given and given for life to one who, whatever his virtues or

¹ Letter to Lansdowne at Vienna, October 19th, 1839, MS.

talents might be, must be a total stranger to the recollections and the hopes, the party interests and the party feelings, of English life. What the future Consort of the Queen might think, or say, or do, no one could pretend to conjecture. His likings or dislikings, his preferences or prejudices, his reliance or reserve were all certain more or less to influence in time to come the conduct of affairs ; and it was hard to surmise what these or any of them would be. Would a man who had had the rare fortune of enjoying for the two freshest years of royal life the full measure of unqualified confidence frankly advise and sincerely promote the taking of a step not absolutely requisite as a matter of public policy, and not counselled or suggested from any influential quarter as of early expediency ? The Duke was not unaware of the direction whence a princely consort was likely to come ; and to whatever extent he believed the rumours that already prevailed, he must have felt that plausible excuses on the score of youth and inexperience might have been assigned for procrastination. Prince Albert was in fact a few months younger than the Queen ; he had hitherto had comparatively little opportunity of acquiring what is called a knowledge of the world ; and with public business, civil or military, he was wholly unacquainted. Melbourne pondered all these things too ; and with King Leopold had discussed gravely and anxiously all the contingencies and exigencies of the occasion. Like him he had formed the conviction that it would be best for the comfort, security, and honour of his confiding mistress that she should bestow her hand on her cousin, young as he was, and trust to her pure, gentle, and exalted influence to complete the formation of his character and disposition. To say that he did not feel it to be a perilous venture, would be to call him flatterer or fool. It was his most exquisite pride to be, and to be recognised as being, the faithful and affectionate friend of the Queen. He foresaw clearly enough the power he was surrendering, but once convinced that the proper time had come, he resolved to suffer no impediment removable by him to stand in the way.

In the beginning of October Prince Albert and his brother the Duke of Saxe Coburg were invited to Windsor. They remained some weeks, and during their stay all was arranged. When her Majesty informed the Premier of her decision, he expressed the greatest satisfaction, and his confident belief that the announcement would be received with pleasure and approval by the nation. Having communicated the fact to the Cabinet, the Privy Council, in accordance with precedent, were summoned for the 23rd of November to receive from her Majesty in person the intimation of her purpose in a matter deeply affecting the welfare of the realm.

In a letter to the Queen the Prince expressed a strong desire that his household should comprise men of both parties, and, if possible, should consist of persons generally recognised as having done good service to the State. Many considerations which probably did not then occur to him influenced the selection actually made. Mr. Anson,

who for some time had been the minister's most confidential private secretary, was recommended by him to perform the same function for the Prince. It is said by his biographer that the nomination caused some disappointment, as jarring with his wish to commence his career in England without the appearance of exclusive or sectional surroundings. But it must be remembered that the obligations of Melbourne to consider the theoretical desires of the Prince could not outweigh his sense of duty to his political friends, who implicitly trusted him in all that concerned the stability of the Administration; and, taking all things into account, it would certainly have been deemed imprudent if not quixotic in him to have placed in the first instance next the person of the illustrious stranger, one of the party who daily and hourly avowed their anxiety for his overthrow and the subversion of the policy he had been placed and kept in power to defend. George Anson was a tried, discreet, and sensible man, high-bred in feeling as in bearing; capable, without prompting, of giving good advice when asked, and incapable of the folly of making a suggestion when it was not wanted. He had been trained, in short, in no ordinary school what to do, and not to do, what to hear as though he heard it not, and what to observe and be ready to recall if necessary, as though, in the meanwhile, he remembered not. How completely he disarmed any sentiment of distrust by his tact, temper, and fidelity is well known. If any one felt eventually jealousy or disappointment, it was not the Prince; but the grave has closed over all, with misapprehensions and misgivings that perhaps are ineradicable from relations so delicate and so peculiar: and who of generous and chastened feelings would ask explanations that never can be given?

There were Court perplexities and rivalries to be considered, and, if possible, avoided in anticipation of the new order of things. The King of Hanover was on this, as on all other occasions, little disposed to be accommodating:—

“I received your letter this morning. I have written to the King of Hanover to make the proposal you suggest, and if he refuses it, I think we should take his apartments. What I take him to mean by his letter to Duncannon is this: I retain my house because there are such things going on in England that it may be necessary for me to return thither. And absurd as this may be, there are not wanting persons here who would commend him in that view. This is avoided by offering him apartments at Kensington. Precedence at the marriage cannot be given by authority. It must be conceded by those who are entitled to it. This may perhaps be managed; but it will not do to attempt to place him before the Queen-Dowager. I have got Holland to write to the Duke of Sussex. I fear he is more likely to persuade the Duke of Cambridge than the Duke of Cambridge him. Neither of them are very strong, but Sussex is the strongest.”¹

On the 20th of January a bill was brought in regulating the legal

status, rank, and dignity of the Prince. Some difference of opinion seemed likely to arise on certain points of precedence; but it was felt on both sides to be desirable to avoid, if possible, any controversy in Parliament that might be imputed to party feeling. The bill as framed unconditionally gave Prince Albert the first place in the realm next to the throne during the term of his natural life, and had he survived the Queen without issue he would have taken precedence of the eldest son of the Heir Presumptive. This Lord Lyndhurst and other friends of King Ernest would not allow. The Duke of Sussex also, as appears from a confidential note of Lord Monteagle, was disposed to stand for what he called the rights of his family.¹ The committee on the bill was deferred, in order to give time for consideration, and in the hope that some agreement might be come to in the interim. The Premier had recently added to his Cabinet a diplomatist of distinction, whose services were now put in requisition.

Lord Clarendon, who in 1838 had succeeded his uncle in his title and estates, returned from Spain in October, and in January, 1840, was made Lord Privy Seal. In earlier life, as Commissioner of Excise, he had been personally known to the Duke of Wellington, and during his brief tenure of the Foreign Office in 1835 had received from his Grace more than one expression of confidence and good-will; and now that their relative positions were changed, it became easier for him than some other members of the Government to communicate informally with the leader of the Opposition in the Lords, on subjects of delicacy in which neither of the great parties of the State could have any motive to disregard the susceptibilities of the Court. Lord Clarendon therefore called at Apsley House, and during his visit received intimations wrapped in no surplusage of diplomatic phrase that the Duke liked Melbourne, believed him to be actuated by feelings worthy of his position, and deserving of support wherever party honour did not interfere. The Premier was not wanting in words of due acknowledgment:—

“I received from Lord Clarendon an account of the conversation which passed yesterday between him and your Grace upon the subject of Prince Albert’s precedence. I could not but be highly gratified by the report which he made of the tone and feelings of your Grace’s observations; although I was deeply concerned to find that upon the substance of the question itself there was so wide a difference between us. As we have, however, but one object in view, and that is to settle the matter as quickly and with as little discussion as possible, your Grace will feel that nothing could be so conducive to the attainment of this end, as that we should be acquainted before the question comes on, with the course which your Grace intends to take, and have the means of deliberating upon it. If your Grace acquiesces in this view, you will perhaps be kind enough to favour me with this information.”²

¹ January 2nd, 1840. ² From South Street, February 2nd, 1840.

In the course of the evening he received the following reply :—

“Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the prospect of putting an end to all discussion on the Precedency Bill. I requested Lord Lyndhurst this day to have two amendments prepared, one in the hypothesis of Prince Albert being created a Peer ; the other in the hypothesis of his not being created a Peer. I expect to receive these proposed amendments early in the morning. I will send them to your Lordship for your consideration, as soon as I shall have received them.”¹

Next morning brought a further note of Lord Lyndhurst's amendments, which seemed to have dealt exclusively with the question whether or not it was intended to create the Prince a Peer :—

First.—In case no intimation should be conveyed of the intention to create Prince Albert a Peer, after the words natural life in the third clause of the bill, insert the words such precedence ; and that before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and all other great officers, and the Dukes other than and except the Dukes of the Blood Royal, and all other peers of this Realm as her Majesty shall deem fit and proper, any law, statute, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

Second.—In case an intimation should be conveyed of the intention to create Prince Albert a Peer, such intimation should be inserted in the third clause, and after the word celebrated, the words created a peer of this realm should be inserted, it shall be lawful, should follow. After the words natural life insert such precedence and rank in and out of the Lords House of Parliament before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and all the great officers and Dukes of the Blood Royal, and all other Dukes of this Realm as her Majesty shall deem fit and proper, any law, statute, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

There was no intention of conferring on the royal bridegroom the dignity of a peerage which would only have given him a seat in the Upper House junior to the four-and-twenty dukes already existing. But the effect of the proposed amendment was to order by statute that the King of Hanover as Duke of Cumberland, the Duke of Sussex and the Duke of Cambridge, and after the death of each respectively his son and successor, should take precedence of the future husband of the Queen. This was not what ministers could agree to, and the controversy was only got rid of by the clauses regarding precedency being wholly withdrawn, leaving no other provisions remaining than those requisite for naturalisation.

In the memorable struggle which arose between the Commons and the courts of law, on the subject of privilege, the Melbourne Cabinet stood firmly for the rights of either House of Parliament to print and publish matter of any kind whatsoever at its discretion. For printing and circulating the report of a Select Committee on Prisons which

¹ February 2nd, 1840, half-past 7 p.m.

stigmatised a certain book as "disgusting and obscene" its publisher, J. J. Stockdale, brought an action against Messrs. Hansard, whose plea of authorization was disallowed by Lord Denman on the ground that no order of the House of Commons could justify the publication of a libel. Damages were assessed at £600, which the sheriffs of Middlesex were directed by the Court of Queen's Bench to pay over to the plaintiff. The House summoned them to appear at the bar; ¹ commanded them to refund the money to the defendants, and committed them for contempt of its privileges for hesitating to do so. A writ of *habeas corpus* required the Serjeant-at-Arms to bring the imprisoned Sheriffs into court, where their submission that they could not disobey the order of Parliament was allowed, and they were remanded to Newgate. After weeks spent in discussing the conflict of jurisdictions, on the 5th of March a bill was brought in by Lord J. Russell, and carried by 149 to 106, interdicting all further procedure in pending suits; and for the future rendering the privilege of either House a legal warrant for the report of any words spoken within its walls or the circulation of any document laid upon its table; the majority of the Opposition in both Houses loudly protesting, and Brougham most loudly and vehemently of all. But Sir Robert Peel on one side and O'Connell on the other concurred in maintaining the supreme and absolute privilege of Parliament to say by word of mouth or print of type whatever touched the welfare and safety of the realm; and Melbourne entered heartily into the great contention, speaking his best and showing a truly liberal comprehension of the important issues it involved. Easily tired of the shallows of vulgar controversy, he liked to feel the deep waters under him. For practice at the Bar as a younger son, he had read no more than idlers generally do; but after he had ceased to think of law as a profession he studied deeply and thoughtfully all of it that a statesman ought to know. His knowledge of constitutional as of ecclesiastical history was profound; and his respect for the traditions of the best periods of parliamentary life was cordial and true—he hated subversive novelties, and whatever tended to unsettle needlessly the minds of the community; and he therefore wished to confirm and strengthen all the powers of Parliament as the best of guarantees for all other liberties. He saw that the political ascendancy of class was going and that the political prerogative of the Crown was gone; and he clung therefore more than ever to the policy of combining, equalising, and strengthening the privileges of the two Houses of Parliament as the only bulwark left, as he used to say, against the fitful raging of the sea—the fitful madness of the people.

He was congratulating himself on the termination of the controversy by the liberation of the sheriffs ² under an order of the House, when tidings reached him by telegraph of an event which inflicted on the Administration an unexpected and irreparable blow. Letters from Ire-

¹ January 18th, 1840.

² April 15th, 1840.

land had mentioned on the previous day that the illness of Mr. Drummond had suddenly assumed a serious character ; but his comparative youth, the natural strength of his constitution, and the vivacity of his communications on various matters of importance, up to the end of the preceding week, forbade any thought of alarm concerning his condition. Few at a distance understood how deeply the continued strain of five years' overwork had undermined the stability of his frame, and rendered him a too easy prey to inflammatory disease. Indefatigable in the discharge of his arduous duties, he rode into Dublin as usual on the morning of the 11th of April, and though feeling unwell, remained at the Castle until after dark, having been actively engaged without intermission for more than nine hours. Next morning he had recourse to medical aid ; but skill and care proved unavailing, and after much suffering, but without losing self-possession, he sank at last a victim to his devotion to the service of his adopted country. Seldom has sympathy or sorrow been more generally evinced in Ireland for the loss of a public man. The bickerings of party contention were hushed when it became known that his life was in danger, and on the announcement of his premature decease an universal sense of sadness seemed to overspread all classes of the community. His remains were followed to the grave by the Viceroy, the Duke of Leinster, the Archbishop of Dublin, Lord Morpeth, and many other persons of distinction ; while the pall was borne by Lord Plunket, four of the judges, and Sir John Burgoyne. To his mother Lord Ebrington wrote :—

"How severe your affliction must be I can but too well understand, after the opportunities which I derived from our daily and confidential intercourse of observing those noble and endearing qualities of heart and mind, which made me feel for him quite the affection of a brother."

His old chief, whom he had recently visited at Althorp, and who was not a man given to words of exaggerated eulogy, wrote :—

"If ever a man died for his country he did so, and that country ought not, and I believe will not be sparing in its expressions of gratitude to his memory. I knew that the labour he was going through was beyond human endurance, and I urged him to take the first opportunity to retire from his position in Ireland and come into Parliament, and he promised me he would do so. My loss is great indeed in the loss of such a friend ; the loss of the country is great in the loss of such a public man. It was under the extra labour (self-)imposed on him by two great works—his report on the railway system for Ireland, and his re-organization of the constabulary force—that his health broke down. He died, therefore, for his country, and he died doing her as great good as any one man ever effected."¹

The clear-sighted and disinterested statesman from his retirement would fain have encouraged his friends in office to persist in the endeavour to regenerate Ireland physically and socially in the manner

¹ Private Letter from Earl Spencer, April 26th, 1840.

traced by Drummond. But unhappily no successor worthy to be named with him took his place ; and the splendid project of a complete system of national railways like that which the legislature of Belgium had created was allowed to drop under the veto of Sir Robert Peel. Seven years had not passed until famine smote the ill-fated land ; and it is not too much to say the misery and loss and shame attendant thereupon were rendered threefold deeper by the want of cheap and rapid means of communication, which a comprehensive railway system would have supplied. Instead of better and cheaper highways, the opponents of the Melbourne Government proposed to take away some of the scanty and inadequate franchises conferred on Ireland by the Reform Act.

Lord Stanley undertook to introduce a measure for the registration of voters on the western side of the Channel that would have the effect of materially curtailing the constituencies, which, though comparatively small, returned seventy supporters of ministers out of one hundred and five members. The second reading was carried by a majority of 250 to 234 ;¹ but popular opinion was so quickly aroused to what was regarded as the disclosure of reactionary designs, that in a much fuller House the motion to go into committee was only carried (through the desertion of half-a-dozen Liberals) by a majority of three ; and at the close of the session no effectual progress had been made with the bill. But the exasperation of party feeling which its protracted discussion caused was not soon to pass away. An article in the *Examiner* affixed to its author the epithet of "Scorpion Stanley," while the *Times* recommended the curtailment of the popular suffrage as necessary to diminish the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy, whom it stigmatised as "surpliced ruffians." Melbourne deplored the violence of language used on both sides ; but still more the adoption by the Opposition leaders of a policy which he declared they would repudiate whenever they came into power. Stanley might possibly deceive himself as to the practicability of undoing what had been done in 1832 towards the establishment of something like the semblance of equal franchises throughout the United Kingdom ; but Peel and Graham could not be so deceived, and neither of them would in office think of enacting what they now reproached his Cabinet with refusing to enact. If by outbidding them with measures they meant to carry, they could attain power, he never would complain ; but he resented bitterly the tactics thus pursued, and he had not long to wait for the realisation of his disdainful anticipations.² Under every change of circumstance he continued to entertain a greater respect for the impetuous lieutenant than the more far-sighted chief ; and the language which he was accustomed to speak of them in private always indicated this preference.

¹ March 26th, 1840.

² A few months after the change of ministry, Sir James Graham, in reply to a question in Parliament, declared that looking at the restricted state of the Irish constituencies they could not bring in any measure resembling Lord Stanley's bill.

"For a long time, says Lord Russell, Palmerston had observed total silence with respect to his views on the complications of the East; but 1840 witnessed his diplomatic ability and success as a statesman."¹

In full detail he explained to the Cabinet the imminency of the danger to which the advance of Ibrahim Pasha's army exposed the Turkish Empire, and he asked for authority to conclude a treaty for its protection against the subversive designs of the Pasha of Egypt, who was known to rely for encouragement and aid on France. Lord Holland and Lord Clarendon favoured the French alliance, and deprecated the policy which they believed would bring it to an end. The majority in the Cabinet sided cordially with Palmerston.

By Mr. Ellice and other intimates of Holland House M. Guizot was assured that his Government had nothing to apprehend in the way of open interference by England, acting alone or in concert with the other great Powers, and Louis Philippe relied on these assurances implicitly. Time pressed, the Egyptian army continued to advance through Syria, and should any very great reverse occur to the forces of the Sultan, the collapse of the Ottoman power might be irretrievable; and the attempt to withhold Russia from dividing the spoil would come too late. Palmerston accordingly addressed to Melbourne, as head of the Government, a masterly exposition of his policy, on which he desired a decision without delay, as in case of its rejection he must ask to be relieved of the responsibility of office. He sent a copy to Lord John, by whom it was promptly and cordially approved. But should Holland be hastily betrayed into resigning, the Administration, already weakened by secession, would probably come to an end. The leader of the Commons, therefore, urged the Premier to give time for deliberation and conference with the dissentient minority. The result was that Palmerston carried his point; the secret of the Quadruple Treaty was loyally kept until it had been actually signed, and M. Guizot was obliged to confess to his Court that he had been wholly misinformed. Instructions were already on their way to Admiral Stopford and Sir Charles Napier to warn the Egyptian army back, and in any event protect Constantinople. Ibrahim's victorious progress was arrested, and within a few months Mehemet Ali was content to make peace on terms not inconsistent with the preservation of the suzerainty of the Porte. When Parliament met in the following spring it readily indemnified the minister for assumptions of authority whose wisdom was vindicated by success; and though differences in council were felt warmly and argued vehemently, they were never suffered to disturb the friendship and esteem of colleagues who had been so long united.

Each step of the negotiations was previously communicated to her Majesty, whose good-will towards Louis Philippe never led her to hesitate about sanctioning the policy which national interests seemed

¹ 'Recollections and Suggestions,' ch. ii. p. 259.

to require. Although entailing oftentimes a serious addition to the other cares and labours of State, the Queen has invariably desired to be made fully acquainted with the nature and character of diplomatic dealings of importance with foreign Powers ; and it is no more than a just acknowledgment of steadfastness of royal patriotism to say that no minister who succeeded Melbourne ever failed to find the ready and cordial sympathy in the nation's wants and wishes which is the best guerdon of a people's trust and loyalty.

The death of Bishop Jenkinson drew upon Melbourne once more the convergent fire of clerical importunities ; but to none was the offer of St. David's crozier sent, of the many who relied on parliamentary influence or family claims,—and to none did it occasion more surprise than the unambitious object of the Premier's choice. In 1834 Connop Thirlwall, then a distinguished fellow and tutor of Trinity, had published a pamphlet in favour of admitting dissenters to the University ; and in combating the objections usually urged, he had spoken freely of the perfunctory services in College Chapel, and the notoriously undevotional character of the attendants. Great offence was taken by some at these observations, and Dr. Wordsworth, then master, addressed to him a letter of rebuke, in which he pronounced the avowal of such opinions incompatible with his position as tutor. Thirlwall indignantly resigned, to the great regret of both the senior and junior fellows who knew his educational worth, and condemned the censure passed upon him as wholly unwarrantable. He continued to reside at Cambridge, and to take part in the examination for fellowships, while more than ever he applied himself to literary pursuits. In 1825 he had published a translation of Schleiermacher's Gospel of St. Luke, which did not escape animadversion by certain ecclesiastical critics. In concert with his friend Julius Hare, he likewise undertook the translation of Niebuhr's History of Rome, the influence of which in modifying established opinions it is not easy to over-estimate.¹ Before the change of Government in 1834, he made up his mind to take the College living of Kirkby Lonsdale in Yorkshire, where he lived contentedly surrounded by his books and devoted to the cares of his parish. Every summer he went abroad or into Wales, his pastoral duties being taken during his absence by one or other of the friends at Cambridge to whom he was endeared.² It thus fell out that when a letter franked by the First Minister reached the Rectory the owner was absent, and his servants knew not where he was to be found. One of his intimates, Mr. J. A. Barnes, undertook to find him, but for some days searched in vain. At length as he passed after nightfall a village inn, his eyes rested on a shadow on the window-blind, cast by a strong light within. He could not be mistaken. "My man at last," he said ; and entering, presented the letter which made his unexpectant friend a spiritual peer. Thirlwall's first impulse was to refuse. He was anxious

¹ Published 1828-1831.

² Letter from Dr. W. H. Thompson, Master of Trinity, June 14th, 1877.

to complete his History of Greece, and was meditating a visit to the land of art and song during the autumn. It is said to have taken all the power of suasion by his friends to make him agree to be a bishop. His hesitation somehow became known, and it tended to confirm the conviction that he who was least anxious for promotion was most deserving of it.

He called at South Street as he had been asked to do ; and on finding that the minister had not yet risen, was about to leave his card, when he was told that directions had been given that he was to be shown in whenever he happened to come. Melbourne was, in bed surrounded with letters and newspapers.

"Very glad to see you ; sit down, sit down : hope you are come to say you accept. I only wish you to understand that I don't intend if I know it to make a heterodox bishop. I don't like heterodox bishops. As men they may be very good anywhere else, but I think they have no business on the Bench. I take great interest, he continued, in theological questions, and I have read a good deal of those old fellows, pointing to a pile of folio editions of the Fathers. They are excellent reading and very amusing ; some time or other we must have a talk about them. I sent your edition of Schleiermacher to Lambeth, and asked the Primate to tell me candidly what he thought of it ; and look, here are his notes in the margin ; pretty copious, you see. He does not concur in all your opinions ; but he says there is nothing heterodox in your book."

This was peculiarly gratifying to the visitor, for Archbishop Howley was a great scholar and a great churchman ; and hated with all his heart the multiplication of Whig suffragans in his province : but he was a just man, and bore his testimony according to the faith that was in him. Briefly and without blandishment, Thirlwall responded to the appeal thus made to his sense of religious honour. He valued highly the confidence implied in being unexpectedly sought out to fill the vacant see, and nothing could be more alien to his feelings than any reservation of conscience or thought of insincerity in accepting it. Melbourne was satisfied that he had chosen the right sort of man ; and after an episcopate of five-and-thirty years the public judgment has notably ratified his choice.

It must be owned that Melbourne had a wayward love of paradox ; and once in the vein, he would defend his position, if vigorously assailed, with an infinite variety of weapons, heavy and light, coarse and refined, sentimental and sardonic, as the whim prompted. Then would come a fit of abstraction, ending frequently in broken monologue, quaint, odd, at times unintelligible to his wondering hearers, and at times more explicit than agreeable. On other occasions the ice would break up even in more startling fashion, and he would pour forth a torrent of animated talk about something that nobody else who was present had been thinking of ; or abruptly ask a question ever so remote from the current topic of the hour. The habit of talking to himself aloud, which used to amuse him so much in his early friend

Dudley, gained upon him as he advanced in years. Coming out of the morning room at Brooks's one day, an acquaintance whom he did not notice observed him stop short in the middle of the hall, and after a few minutes heard him say, loud enough for any one to hear, "I'll be hanged if I'll do it for you, my lord." A still more curious instance used to be told by the late Lord Hardwicke, who happened to be engaged in writing at a table in the library of the Lords, when the House broke up somewhat sooner than was expected after the first angry debate on the Non-Intrusion question in Scotland. The annual discussions on the Irish Appropriation had not long been brought to an end, when this new ecclesiastical turmoil burst forth unexpectedly in another part of the realm. He had listened with curiosity, regret, pain, and at length with dismay, to the outbreak of contending prejudices and passions among the peers from beyond the Tweed; and his carriage not having come when the contention ceased, he threw himself into an easy-chair opposite the fire in the library and relieved his pent-up soul with the exclamation, "God bless me! what's to be done now? I had only just settled that confounded Irish Church question, when the earth yawns and here comes up a devilish worse one about the Scotch Church." At dinner at Holland House one day, he suddenly apostrophised a young nobleman recently returned from France, and who was seated at the opposite side of the table,—“Don't you consider it was a most damnable act of Henri IV. to change his religion with a view to securing the Crown?” Lord H. Vane assented; but nobody else had been thinking of the gay King of Navarre, and nobody could discover what could have provoked the question.¹

Towards the end of June it became necessary to consider how provisions should be made by statute for appointing a Regency to guard against the contingency of the demise of the Crown, or such indisposition of her Majesty as would prevent her attending to affairs of State. Melbourne knew that he could rely on the devotion of the Duke to the Queen to aid in preventing, if possible, invidious or useless discussion on the subject; and he resolved to offer in person to confer confidentially with him as to what should be done. According to his wont the Duke noted carefully in his own hand what took place at the interviews between himself and the minister at Apsley House, for it appears there was more than one:—

“I received a note from Lord Melbourne in which he informed me, that he wished to speak to me on the subject of the Regency; and that he would call upon me at twelve o'clock, if he should not receive an intimation of my wish that he should not. He came; and immediately asked me what I thought upon the subject. I asked him what his own opinion was. He said that it appeared absolutely necessary to provide for the exercise of the royal authority in case of any misfortune happening to the Queen, and that she should leave a child alive. That in case of the appointment of a Regency, it was better

¹ Duke of Cleveland to the Author, Raby, December 17th, 1875.

that it should not be a Council, but a sole Regent, and that considering that the person exercising the sovereign authority was to be the guardian of the child, it was desirable that the father should be the person selected. I told Lord Melbourne that of course I could not tell him the opinions of others, that I did not know what those opinions were, much less had I authority to state them. That my own opinion agreed very much with his, and that I thought that he could not do better than follow the precedent of the year 1830. The conversation then turned upon the conduct and character of Prince Albert. I asked him whether he had conversed with his colleagues, and what their opinions were. He said, Yes; that they were sensible of the necessity of adopting some such arrangements, but were apprehensive of the difficulties of the question, and of the invidious nature of the discussion, in case there should be any material difference of opinion with respect to the person. The conversation then turned upon other measures which it might be necessary to adopt. First.—Supposing the Queen to be confined to her bed, and unable to sign papers for any length of time. Second.—Supposing her to be alive, but in a state of health to be absolutely incapable of attending to business of any description. Whether in the first case it might be expedient to re-enact the Signet Statute Law of the time of George IV. Whether in the second it might not be expedient to enable her to appoint a Regent as she would if she was absent herself from the kingdom. Lord Melbourne conversed very freely upon all these points. It is evident that he wishes that Prince Albert should be the person. I cannot say that there has been any formal discussion in the Cabinet, or that others are looking to other arrangements; but I think that he apprehends that they may. I repeated that I could not tell him what was the opinion of our friends, but I said that I would communicate with them, and let him know that of the leading men among them if they should permit me.”¹

Confidence begets confidence, and when the subject was resumed the rival leaders reciprocally laid aside reserve in their communications, written as well as verbal. The session was drawing to a close, and something would have to be done. Melbourne wrote accordingly:—

“Upon considering this matter of the Regency with my colleagues, we are of opinion that although it is rather a delicate and difficult matter to word such a message, which must be done in very general terms, yet upon precedent and principle it would not do to proceed in such a matter except by message. It seems to me that a matter so immediately concerning the Crown, its dignity and feeling, Parliament should not be called upon to act except by message from the Crown. We shall therefore bring a message down to both Houses to-morrow which I hope you will approve. I wrote on Friday to the

¹ Memorandum of conversation between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Melbourne about the Regency, 1840.

Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge, informing them of the course intended to be pursued. The Duke of Cambridge spoke to me of it in the House of Lords confidentially, but did not expressly declare his concurrence and approbation. From the Duke of Sussex, I am sorry to say, I received yesterday evening a letter in a very different tone, expressing strong disapprobation, and declaring that he should give the measure his opposition and assert the rights of his family. Believe me yours faithfully."¹

Not to be outdone in communicativeness, his Grace ere he slept sent the following reply :—

"I write without having time to consult the opinion of others. As I told your Lordship before, there is no doubt upon the principle of the measure proposed. I think the proper mode of bringing it under the consideration of Parliament is by message. The subject is one of delicacy ; but it is better that it should originate from the best authority than that there should be any doubt about the necessity for making a provision such as is proposed. I don't hesitate to tell your Lordship that the Duke of Cambridge called upon me yesterday on his way to Kensington, by desire of the Duke of Sussex, to see his Royal Highness upon this subject. He left me disposed, apparently determined to support the proposed measure. I don't think that you will experience any difficulty on this part. I entertain no doubt but that your proposition will be supported by a large majority of the House of Lords. I have the honour to be your Lordship's most faithful Servant."²

Had the alternative been whether the Prince Consort or the Duke of Sussex should be named in the Regency Bill, the confluent streams of opinion might perhaps have mingled less rapidly. But if the line of presumptive heirship was to be observed, King Ernest must have been nominated in the bill, and he would have been a profound judge of human nature who could tell whether such a contingency was more unwelcome in the eyes of the learned ex-Chancellor or the illustrious Field Marshal. Nor can it admit of reasonable doubt that if such a proposal had been made it would have been rejected by the House of Commons. The Duke of Sussex was personally popular, and had he been a man of striking talents or conspicuous achievements it is possible that a personal party might have gathered round him and divided the votes of the Commons. But the royal recluse at Kensington if he had no enemies had certainly no following, and none but a wrong-headed flatterer or reckless marplot would have advised him to challenge a proposition which had the cordial assent of every English statesman of the day.

"Lord Melbourne called upon me this morning by appointment. I told him that I had communicated with the leading men in the House of Commons, and with Lord Lyndhurst on the subject on

¹ From South Street., July 12th, 1840.

² From Apsley House, July 12th, 1840.

which he had spoken to me, and that they were of opinion that in case it should be necessary under existing circumstances to make provision for the exercise of the royal authority, by the appointment of a Regent, the arrangement should be made in conformity with the precedent of 1830; that the Regency should be sole, and that the father of the child should be the person selected. I said that there was every disposition to concur in a legislative provision which it might be necessary to make in the bill to enable the Queen to nominate a person to transact such of the public business as she should think it necessary or convenient to have transacted during her Majesty's temporary indisposition or the circumstances in which she was placed. That it appeared that the use of a signet according to the precedent of the reign of George IV. of which he and I had conversed was not considered to be a desirable mode of providing for this exigency by those whose opinion I had consulted. The conversation then turned upon the time at which the measure should be brought under consideration. I think it will be at an early period. It appears that Lord Melbourne's colleagues are pressed by some of the supporters of the Government to put forward the expediency of the Duke of Sussex being employed in this office. I told Lord Melbourne that I did not think that that proposition would be well received, and that I heard that the King of Hanover was thinking of coming to England; and that if anything like a Council of Regency was to be formed and the Duke of Sussex to be a member, his Lordship might rely upon it that propositions would be made to call to the Council of Regency other members of the House of Brunswick."¹

At the close of the session Lord Lyndhurst summed up the legislative failures of the Government in a caustic and telling speech which nettled the First Minister exceedingly. Melbourne charged the Opposition, in reply, with reckless abuse of their power to frustrate and delay useful measures, in order that they might have the pretence for complaining how little had been done. He instanced in particular the bill for the reform of the Court of Admiralty which had long been required. The bill had improved the position of the Judge and recognised his exceptional right to sit in the House of Commons, a right which few other judicial functionaries enjoyed, and which Brougham denounced as a piece of party favouritism towards the member for the Tower Hamlets, the impartiality of whose decisions might thus be overcast with suspicion. The gratuitous and groundless imputation came with singular infelicity from one whose time in that House was alternately devoted to judgments in appeal and party speeches, and who had peculiar experience of the uprightness and ability of the person he maligned; for Lushington had in other days rendered his assailant valuable professional aid during the Queen's trial and on other occasions.

"I deeply lament, said the Premier, that the hand uplifted to destroy

¹ Conversation with Lord Melbourne, July 1st, 1840.

this bill ought, in reason and right feeling, to have been stretched out to save it. And I cannot refrain from saying that its rejection was one of the most disreputable and unprovoked acts of power that I ever knew to be exercised."

He had, however, the satisfaction of at length witnessing the long-delayed enactment of the law giving elective corporations to the cities and towns of Ireland.

Events in Syria had taken their inevitable course under the treaty signed by the four Powers. Ibrahim Pasha's victorious march was arrested, and the taking of Acre by an Anglo-Turkish force under Sir Charles Napier put an end to the dreams of Egyptian ambition. But the anger of France was not easily appeased. Guizot had been self-blindfolded by his own airs of impenetrable conceit, and his royal master, who believed himself to be more astute than any politician of the older Governments of Europe, had been quietly baffled and isolated by a conjoint act of which they had all in vain given him warning. It was certainly a humiliation hard to bear imperturbably, and his daring minister was all for resenting it. There was an interval during which the English Cabinet (all but Palmerston) felt anxious if they did not look grave.

The session being over, the Duke of Wellington received an invitation to Windsor, where he remained some days.

"I visited Lord Melbourne, by his desire, in his room on the 18th, in the morning after breakfast. Upon my entrance, he said, Well! this is a fine situation into which we have brought ourselves! I said, I believe that I was the person who suggested to you and advised you originally to protect the Porte against the usurping aggression of Mehemet Ali. But I think that the difficulties of your position do not turn upon this measure so much as they do upon the mode in which you have endeavoured to execute your purpose. The French are, or pretend to be sorely offended; have collected large armies and fleets, and other means and resources; and they are now driving their sovereign to the necessity of making use of these means in war! In his letter to King Leopold the King complains of being sorely aggrieved, and it is obvious than even he is not unprepared to go to any extremities! I observed to Lord Melbourne, that Lord John Russell would probably have informed him of what I thought of their negotiations, and that I had suggested that it should be carried on in future according to the regular diplomatic forms. I said that at that time I had not known exactly what had passed between Lord Palmerston and the French Ambassador; but I knew that the negotiations had not been carried on according to diplomatic forms. That consequently when charged with having kept France in the dark, and out of the secret, they could not prove what they had communicated, nor what the answer of France had been, nor what had been the proposition of France, or her conduct in respect to the execution of the very measures contained in these propositions; and that this was the real difficulty in which they were placed at this moment. They could give no answer

to the complaints of France! particularly to those of the King! The danger of a war was imminent, they could not prove that they were in the right, they were in no manner prepared for their defence. I said, I conclude that you must endeavour to preserve the peace of the world. Happen what may in respect to the Eastern Question, you must endeavour to preserve peace, for you are in no manner prepared for war. I mentioned the state of the naval means at Portsmouth. I said, your object must be to bring France back into the alliance. From the peace of 1814, when France discontinued her revolutionary courses, we thought that the only mode of giving permanence and stability to the general peace was to associate France in the general European alliance. I acted upon this principle in 1830, when I at once admitted into the alliance Louis Philippe, upon his declaring that he would carry into execution all the treatise by which Charles X. had been bound. You must renew the negotiations for the settlement of the Eastern Question on a new basis. The Emperor of Russia having agreed not to renew the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Powers of Europe having agreed that the Black Sea should be *Mare Clausum*, propose that the Porte shall have the guard and care of the entrance thereof, under such provisions and regulations as it may be thought proper to propose; and that in order to enable the Porte to perform the duty which her position as well as the interests of Europe require from her, propose that she should be rendered strong and independent by a definition of the state of possession as between the Porte and her vassal Mehemet Ali. That France as well as the other great Powers of Europe should be called upon to regulate and enforce this state of possession at present, and should guarantee it for the future with a view to the permanent security of the other objects."

"The independence of the Porte, and the preservation of the state of the Black Sea as *Mare Clausum*,—if Louis Philippe is not gone wild he will adopt this plan, which is practicable, inasmuch as all the difficult points have been agreed to by the other Powers. During my residence at Windsor Lord Melbourne talked to me on other subjects. I think him quite sound upon the Corn Laws. I think him prepared to adopt the views which I suggested for making further provisions for the parochial clergy as well as for the Church in general. He told me that the Queen was now quite satisfied with the arrangement of the Precedency Question, and with the position in which Prince Albert had been placed in the House of Lords upon the occasion of the prorogation.

"In the memorandum which I wrote of what passed on Monday last in conversation with Lord Melbourne, I omitted that he showed me a despatch which had just then been sent to him by Lord Palmerston from the Queen's Minister at Stutgard, in which the latter reports what he had heard of the diplomatic meeting which had taken place at Prince Metternich's in Bohemia, at Kœnigstadt. He writes that the Prince and the other ministers were very much disturbed by the reports which they had received of the violence excited in France by

the Quadruple Treaty ; of the threats of war, and of the preparations made, the levy of troops, the augmentation of the fleet, and the collection of means for the purpose of carrying on war. That Prince Metternich was thinking of recommending to the Diet apparently to make immediate levy of troops on the part of the Confederation of Germany to the amount of 25,000 men. The curious circumstance attending this despatch is that it represents the feeling at Prince Metternich's château to be entirely different from that which Newman stated to me, and probably to the Government, as prevailing. But I don't believe that Newman knew what Prince Metternich thought after he should have received reports that the King had consented to the armament. Lord Melbourne was very much disturbed by this despatch from Stutgard. He seemed to think that the levy of troops by the German Confederation would lead to an immediate collision. My opinion is that Prince Metternich wants to move into Italy an additional corps of Austrian troops, which he cannot do unless their stations are taken up by the troops.

"It is in Italy that the French threaten to attack the Austrians ; but I believe principally by revolutionary means."

France was arming, and an impending rupture seemed to be nigh at hand. Melbourne wrote confidentially to King Leopold expressing his regret that from any cause the intimacy and friendship hitherto subsisting between the two nations should be interrupted. But if the threatened increase of the French army were proceeded with, he would immediately summon Parliament, and take a vote for forty additional sail of the line, which would speedily sweep the seas.¹ He knew how sincerely the King of the Belgians deprecated war between the two countries, and how certain he was to make good use at Neuilly of whatever it was important to make known. Leopold was perhaps the only confidential adviser of Louis Philippe at the moment who understood the temper of England, and the value to be set on the expressions of her public men. Great efforts had been notoriously employed from this side of the channel to persuade French ministers and journalists that the party of peace at any price was strong ; and that in spite of all that Palmerston might wish or say, the majority of the Cabinet would shrink from incurring the responsibility of a collision ; and that when France was prepared to commence hostilities they would succumb. Melbourne felt it to be his duty to dispel this illusion. To do so publicly would have been imprudent, if not impossible ; and no communication through the Embassy at Paris would probably have had the effect. There was but one unexceptionable and certain way of making the communication, and that was the way he adopted.

Meanwhile it was his business to be more than ordinarily careful of what was said and done, in order at least that surface suscep-

¹ See note of Mr. Anson, August 19th, 1844, quoted by Martin, 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i. p. 231.

tibilities might be soothed. From Windsor, on the 18th of August, he wrote :—

"I shall be glad to hear from you from Ireland. Foreign affairs look very threatening. Guizot comes here to-day, and we shall be able to give a better judgment after having seen him. Louis Philippe is certainly very sore himself, and writes to the King of the Belgians in a very reserved manner, and as if unwilling to commit himself for the future."¹

The ambassador did not affect contentment or cordiality, which he owns he did not feel; but his instructions were not to widen the breach between the two Governments, or to compromise the dignity of his own by recrimination or complaint. The narrow range of tone Louis Philippe wished him to observe was less irksome to one of his nature than it would have been to a courtier by education, or to a man of the effusive wit and gaiety of his illustrious rival in the salon and the tribune. With incidents so provocative as those still fresh in every one's recollection, M. Thiers could not have helped indulging in raillery and sarcasm. M. Guizot mutely hugged his sense of national vexation, and enjoyed the privilege of having a grievance. There was a certain art in this, for it enabled him to say, and not to say—to hear with no other answer than a shrug, and when he chose not to hear at all, what to a person of conventional amenity of manner would have been embarrassing. He was always what Talleyrand from the first pronounced him to be, *un intrigant austère*. The First Minister, who hated personal grudges and national quarrels, understood the "puritanical pedantry of the man;" and where he felt safe in thinking aloud, laughed at his undress airs of philosophy. But he felt it was his business to make the best of a position of difficulty, if not of danger. He was ready to make every allowance for mortified self-esteem in the plenipotentiary, and for pique at being outwitted in the face of Europe in his astute master. He quite believed that the subtle King of the French could never rest until he had had his diplomatic revenge; and the event, though it came not in his time as minister, justified his foresight. The fortification of Paris was declared to be a matter of state necessity; but Louis Philippe was not the man to risk a general war on a mere point of national honour, and with sobs of theatrical anguish he accepted the resignation of M. Thiers. A rupture with France having been avoided, Melbourne spared no pains to allay the irritation caused by the late events.

No act of his long public life cost him, perhaps, more dear, from the use that was made of it as a theme of religious reproach, than his presentation, at levée, of Robert Owen to the Queen. When Home Secretary he had admitted this singular man to more than one interview to plead on behalf of the Dorchester labourers; and, struck by his calm and persistent enthusiasm, he listened curiously to certain portions of his schemes for popular regeneration. One of these was

¹ To Lord Lansdowne, from Windsor Castle, August 18th, 1840.

the protection by law of women and children from oppressive labour in factories. Owen had, in point of fact, originally suggested to Sir R. Peel (the elder) the advocacy in Parliament of a bill for that purpose; and for the remedial measure of 1833 he was fervent in gratitude and praise. His utopian and fantastic theories quickly passed, like dim phantoms, from the mind of the much occupied minister, who thought no more of the projector of New Lanark, until June 1839, when he received a letter asking permission to call at Downing Street. Owen's object was, he said, the presentation to her Majesty of a petition couched in unobjectionable terms and pleading generally for the need of educational and industrial measures to mitigate the prevalence of ignorance and pauperism. Many private letters proved the favourable consideration shown to his tentative efforts in the same direction, many years before, by several dignitaries of the Church, by Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Ricardo, by several distinguished noblemen, and above all by the Duke of Kent, to whom he was personally well known. From various parts of the kingdom deputations had visited the Co-operative Settlement established by him near Glasgow, and reported generally in terms of high commendation of the experiment, one of the most striking novelties of which was the first example of an infant school. Mr. Edward Baines, known for his attachment to religious education, bore public testimony to what he and his fellow-citizens from Leeds witnessed there: "The establishment is conducted in a manner superior to any other the deputation ever witnessed, dispensing more happiness than perhaps any other institution in the kingdom where so many poor persons are employed, being founded on an admirable system of moral regulation. . . . In the education of the children the thing that is most remarkable, is the entire absence of everything that is likely to give them bad habits, with the presence of whatever is calculated to inspire them with good ones. The consequence is, that they appear like one well-regulated family, united together by ties of the closest affection;" no one being disparaged or disturbed on account of race, creed, opinions, or former ways of life. Owing to family differences among the principal capitalists in the concern, the industrial colony was after some years broken up; and, failing to re-establish another on a similar footing, Owen went to Germany and to America, seeking more willing proselytes in foreign statesmen and philanthropists. When these hopes vanished he returned to organise on a political and controversial footing his plan for revolutionising society; and, taking to him other spirits more wayward and less scrupulous than himself, he entered into schemes for the overthrow of ecclesiastical and aristocratic institutions; and the establishment instead of a commonwealth founded on secular instruction, disuse of arms, and an agrarian law. These changes were to be brought about, indeed, by argument alone, and the country would soon, it was imagined, be converted by the agencies of a wide-spread propaganda.

Unaware in 1839 how far he had drifted from the modest and

moderate tenets he professed in 1819, and with what different associates he had come to be combined, Melbourne without inquiry imprudently, as he afterwards confessed, told Owen that he had better attend the next levée and that, if necessary, he would himself present him to the Sovereign. On the 26th of June the regenerator of society, as his disciples called him, appeared at court, conforming duly to the indispensabilities of bag-wig and sword; and there on bended knee tendered for himself and fellows, infallible specifics for the evils of the modern world. The valuable prescription was graciously confided to the care of the courtier Secretary of State, who probably never read a word of it, and in five minutes after no one remembered that the prophet of universal demolition and reconstruction had passed through the palace in white silk stockings and buckled shoes. The morning papers duly chronicled the incident with scarce a word of comment. Not a well-bred watch-dog anywhere was heard to bark; only from afar off came a dismal cry of warning, but the unscared world of abuses and enormities went its old-fashioned way. In the course of the autumn, however, one of the irregulars of the crusade against existing institutions, skirmishing in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, challenged to mortal combat any who dared to meet him there, and for several days he was encountered by the Rev. Martin Foye, whose zeal was much applauded by the good folks of the town, and commended by his diocesan. A petition calling for legal proceedings against the further dissemination of socialist errors, and signed by four thousand magistrates, clergymen, and other persons of respectability, was forwarded to the Bishop of Exeter, by whom it was presented to the House of Lords.¹ He dwelt at length upon the subversive tendency of the doctrines which warred alike against Christian morals and established laws, and called the Home Secretary sharply to account for suffering the diffusion of publications tending to unhinge the popular mind. Owen's presentation at levée he excused with the sarcasm that the First Minister was probably unacquainted with the man, his works, or his proceedings; leaving it to be inferred that Melbourne had trifled with his responsibility by introducing an improper character to the Queen. The Duke of Wellington took up the matter in this sense, and was inclined to remonstrate against a supposed deviation from the rule which forbids any one to present to the Sovereign a person with whom he is not acquainted. Normanby deprecated the discussion as likely to do more harm than good; derided the Bishop's fears of revolution and atheism, and doubted whether he had not done more to bring the impugned projects into notice than their authors had been able to do. Melbourne said that he felt it necessary to notice the allusions made to him as the person who had last year performed the formal ceremony of presenting Mr. Owen at court in order to lay before her Majesty a petition from a very numerous body of persons. He must

¹ January 24th, 1840.

protest against the inference which had been drawn in that House and elsewhere, that because he had performed an act of formal duty he had become in any way responsible, or had involved himself in any degree with the opinions of that individual or with the persons whom he represented. He must wholly deny the justice of such an inference in the present case, or in that of any other person whom he might happen to present. He begged to say that he had in nowise lent his sanction to the sentiments of Mr. Owen, but he had not seen any ground for preventing the presentation of the petition with which Mr. Owen had been charged in the manner requested by the subscribers. The circumstances were, briefly, these : Mr. Owen had waited upon him to explain the general views for the regeneration of society embodied in the petition of his friends and followers, and which they respectfully desired permission to submit to her Majesty. He asked how this might properly be done, and in reply he (Lord Melbourne) had told him that the course was to attend at levée ; and when asked to present him, he somewhat imprudently, perhaps, consented to do so. Questions of attendance and presentation at court were not matters of opinion, but duty ; and in the discharge of his duty he had not known anything in the character and opinions of Mr. Owen which should preclude him from that right which he enjoyed in common with other subjects of the Queen. The right reverend prelate had made it a matter of charge against the Government that they had not taken measures for the repression or suppression of opinions which he had said prevailed to a great extent, and which he ascribed to Mr. Owen. Unquestionably such opinions must be considered as in the highest degree pernicious. He did not regard them as free from danger because they were wild or absurd. It had been said justly that in the end truth would prevail, that that which was right would come forth triumphant ; that that which was intrinsically wrong could not long exist he knew. The same sentiment had been eloquently expressed by the noble duke (Wellington) in the course of the previous year, when he declared that he had that regard for the force of truth, and so fully confided in it, that he believed it would always manifest itself in the end by its own strength and power. That was undoubtedly a great, a noble, and a magnanimous sentiment. And when they considered his great experience, and that he had been conversant with all ranks and conditions of men, the declaration became still more valuable. He wished for his own part he could participate fully and unreservedly in such feelings ; but, with his experience of the world, he could not help shuddering at the power of falsehood. He knew the sway that had been exercised by falsehood at all times, and, although truth might be destined to vindicate itself in the end, he could not conceal from himself the fact that falsehood was strong, and would and did frequently prevail for a considerable period, particularly when assisted by active and ingenious advocates and organs, propagating it with every species of malignity and perversion. It was, perhaps, a matter of grave apprehension that

speculative opinions in politics and morals were widely diffused just then, and had long been so throughout the country, not merely on the subjects Mr. Owen had principally in view, but upon almost every question, religious or political ; schemes the most wild, unfathomable, and dangerous ; and many of which had not, like some of Mr. Owen's, the mitigating character of extreme absurdity. But what were they to do for correction of the mischief ? The right reverend prelate had confidently said that the proceedings of the Socialists were illegal, being contrary to the Act which prohibited societies having affiliated branches. Perhaps so ; but how many other societies were in the same condition ? It ought to be well considered before a penal statute was put in force in one case, how far it would affect others. Hitherto that Act of Parliament had not been put in operation. If at any time it had had any effect it was that of deterring. Never had any penal or practical effect resulted from it. He doubted whether the statute would be effectual for the purposes demanded by the right reverend prelate in the present case. But it was said that the object of Mr. Owen and of the Socialists was to alter the whole form of the constitution of the country and to re-appropriate the whole of the property of the realm : and that therefore it was not legal. That might be the case ; but that was not an illegality which could be criminally assigned in the present day, on account of the wide and vague scope of its application. For his own part he should like to know what there was established for the destroying of which there was not some society now in existence. Had they not a Voluntary Society, the avowed object of which was to do away altogether with a church establishment ? and were there not many persons of respectability and character amongst the members of that society ? Nevertheless he would not say that the objects of that society brought it within the penalties of the law. He much doubted, if even a general system of prosecution were instituted against all societies holding speculative opinions as to property, laws, or religion that such a system of prosecution could be easily carried out. He had no wish to dwell upon the extravagant opinions attributed to Mr. Owen. For himself he thought them as visionary and absurd as anything could possibly be, nor did he dislike the system less because it came clothed in the disguise of philanthropy. It did not appear to him to be less dangerous on that account, for it had been frequently remarked that those who professed and appeared to feel the deepest regard for their species, and the widest sentiments of humanity, often became in the course of events the most reckless and merciless. And it was an observation made by one of the leaders of the French revolution, that it was always that which appeared to be the most absurd that led to that which was the most sanguinary. He was unwilling to say a word to palliate or excuse doctrines or opinions the diffusion of which he deeply lamented, but the question for them to consider was, what was the prudent mode of dealing with them under the circumstances ? They all knew that it had not been the practice of this or former Govern-

ments for many years past to institute prosecutions for the publication of speculative opinions—they had unquestionably allowed a political and philosophic press to exist unchecked and unrestrained. That had certainly been the practice for a considerable period, and he believed that a noble and learned friend of his, not then present,¹ could state from his experience as Solicitor and Attorney-General that such prosecutions in his time were found to be unavailing; and that they tended often not to repress, but to develop that which they were intended to put down. He could not at the same time help thinking that the experiment of permitting statements and expressions that might be considered of an absurd or dangerous character to go forth unnoticed and uncontradicted, was a doubtful one. This he had always looked upon as a most serious question; but he had never seen any other mode of acting in such cases that carried with it anything like a probability of success, and he could not help entertaining great misgivings whether the adoption of a different course would be advisable, even in a case like that which had been brought under their notice.

During the autumn the Government lost by death its most popular, and in his peculiar way, its most influential member. Lord Holland, though in declining health, had, like his illustrious kinsman, continued to the last to take a lively interest in affairs, especially in all that concerned our relations with foreign States. Throughout the angry discussions which led to the Quadruple Treaty of July and the expulsion of Ibrahim Pasha from Syria, he had borne an active part, and led, in fact, the section who in the Cabinet had resisted the policy of Palmerston. For several months he was so infirm as to be wheeled in his chair into the House of Lords, and to be obliged to have permission to speak sitting. In August the strength of his constitution visibly failed, and dropsical tendencies were more and more discernible. His cheerfulness never forsook him, and to Melbourne, on the last occasion when he called to see him, he showed the epitaph which he had written for himself:—

“Here lies Henry Richard, Lord Vassal Holland, who in his sixty-seventh year was drowned sitting in his elbow chair.”

On the 22nd of October he passed away, leaving vacant in political society a place which has not since been filled. To the Whig party his loss was indeed great; to its chief irreparable.

¹ Lord Abinger.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FALL OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

Debate on Eastern Question—Duties of Prince Albert—Removal of Plunket—Fixed duty on corn—Defeat on the sugar duties—Results of the general election—Resignation of ministers.

BROUGHAM, in concert with Aberdeen, lost no time in impugning the policy which had been pursued on the Eastern Question as likely to alienate France. Melbourne's defence was not merely that of a colleague, but of one primarily responsible. While he differed with Palmerston in private about the use of irritating phrases and supercilious airs, he promptly and cordially took his full share of accountability for acts done, not because they were irrevocable, but because he thought them righteous and wise. Whatever ill-humour might be transitorily stirred among our susceptible neighbours, England could not afford to see the outworks of the Porte dismantled or seized by any other Power whatsoever. With the system of Ottoman rule he felt in no way concerned. If the people of any province who thought themselves oppressed showed the pluck and persistency the Greeks had shown to fight their way out of the Moslem empire, neither he nor Palmerston would raise a finger or utter a word to force them back into bondage. On the contrary, they would undoubtedly, as Cecil and Walsingham, Pym and Cromwell, Burke and Chatham, Canning and Huskisson, in like circumstances had done—recognise the independence of the new-born child of freedom. But it must first strive and cry into the world of international existence before it could be called by a name of its own, or be entitled to the privileges and benefits of nationhood. From this clear rule, whatever might betide, they, who had held office when the Treaty of London was signed acknowledging the independence of Greece, would not depart; but neither would they stand by and see an old ally hewn down by rebel chiefs incited to sedition by a covetous rival. Tame neutrality on the part of England would be at variance with her interest and her honour. Shorn of his strength, the Moslem could no longer hold Stamboul; and we should then be compelled for our own sakes to incur the cost and burthen of keeping all others out of it. What English minister of sober judgment would precipitate such a contingency or shrink from the plain obligation to avert it if he could? Melbourne knew that these were the opinions of the Duke of Wellington on the Eastern Question; but he could not tell beforehand whether they would be enunciated in debate at this particular juncture.

Rising immediately after Brougham had concluded his diatribe against the foreign policy which had circumscribed the ambition of Mehemet Ali at the sacrifice, as he said, of our alliance with France,

and thus working out blindly the designs of Russia by the severance of the two great Western Powers, Melbourne boldly took his stand on what had been accomplished by the Quadruple Treaty of July, and calmly but firmly asserted the prudence and patriotism of the ministerial policy. "He could not admit the justice of the strictures of the noble and learned Lord. He believed it could be shown that a cause had existed if not of absolute necessity, yet of stringent policy, imperatively calling on the Government to act as they had done for the purpose of preserving the peace of Europe. There was not the slightest ground for the charge of discourtesy towards France. He was asked what was the great object they had had in view? His answer was, the preservation of peace by the settlement of the affairs of the Levant, and by preserving the integrity of the Turkish Empire as much as possible in the state in which it was. It was evident from papers on the table that it was the intention of the Pasha of Egypt to establish his own independence, and to found a new Mahomedan State on the shores of the Mediterranean, and by further encroachments to make himself the greatest Mahomedan power in that part of the world. It was the policy of the other Powers to prevent the execution of such a design. The only charge which could be justly made against them was that of too long delaying to act. This was owing to their earnest desire to act in concert with France. They had been disappointed in this respect; but he still indulged the hope that an agreement of opinion would yet be come to between them. He trusted that ere long they should see all the Great Powers united to secure the peace of the world. But it was not in the power of any one nation to command peace, and it was certainly not the surest way to avoid war to declare beforehand that under no circumstances would we resort to that alternative."

The Duke of Wellington expressed his concurrence in the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne, which he hoped would be unanimously agreed to. "He was one of those who approved of the policy of the measures which had been taken by ministers. The state of things in the Levant had for years excited his anxious attention. He was happy to say that he had reason to think that the dangers which menaced the peace of Europe would be averted, and that France would join the other Powers in maintaining the peace of the world. He knew of no other alliance with France than that of a good understanding in general. They had often acted in concert; sometimes apart. At the negotiations of Verona, where he had been ambassador, France had acted separately from England, yet we did not then take offence. He could not discover in the late proceedings any just cause of quarrel on the part of France. The only fault that he could find was that the negotiations had been carried on orally rather than by notes, according to the usual course. He knew no peculiar advantages obtained by Russia in agreeing to what had been done for the settlement of the affairs of the Levant, as Lord Brougham had supposed. There was no man living who had done half so much

for the preservation of peace and for maintaining the honour of France and promoting her true interests as he had done from 1814 to the last moment he remained in office ; he had done everything in his power to preserve the peace of Europe, and to keep up a good understanding between France and England, from the firm conviction that if France were not placed in the situation she ought to hold in the councils of Europe there was no security for the public peace, or a sound decision on any subject of general policy."

When the Queen next day told Melbourne that if the Duke of Coburg could not stand sponsor at the christening of the Princess Royal, she wished the great soldier to represent him, he expressed great satisfaction, and said, "indeed, the Duke is the best friend we have."¹ Speaking to her Majesty afterwards of the ceremony, he said, laughing, "How her little highness looked round, as if quite conscious that the stir was all about herself."

His freedom and jocosity of manner often disarmed the wariest and wiliest of those with whom he had to do. A journalist who was devoted to the interests of the Government, and who frequently obtained for them, through agencies in the City, early information of importance, plumed himself on never telling all he knew, or allowing men in office to draw from him more than he intended. He called one morning early at South Street, and was shown into the dressing-room, where my Lord was loitering at his toilet, half reading letters, and glancing occasionally at the foreign newspapers, just arrived. His visitor mentioned the contents of a communication he had had from Paris, which gave warning of a political intrigue at the moment on foot in England, in which two persons of consequence were engaged, but one of whom only he named. Melbourne entered frankly into the whole affair, abstaining carefully from asking who was the second sapper and miner at work against him. When the subject was sufficiently discussed, his informant rose and withdrew. Melbourne accompanied him to the top of the staircase, and as he went down leaned over the balustrade, seemingly engaged with filling a towel which he held in his hand, and talking casually about other things ; then, as he turned to say good-bye, he said negligently that he thought he would checkmate both, at least he would try, naming at a shrewd guess the second adversary whom he wanted to know. His informant did not repudiate his surmise, and only bethought him when half-way into the City that by acquiescence he had betrayed the secret which he meant to keep.

It was the minister's desire from the outset that Prince Albert should become thoroughly acquainted with the general principles of the public administration, and with the working of each department as far as he could be expected to devote time to its details, in order that he might usefully bear the part he had assigned to himself of aiding his royal consort in the discharge of her exalted duties ; and

¹ The Queen's Journal. Martin's 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i. p. 100.

the highest of all testimony is borne to Melbourne's anxiety "that the Queen should tell him and show him everything connected with public affairs."¹ The result was, as the Prince himself observed, when writing to his father, that he "studied the politics of the day with great industry, speaking quite openly to the ministers on all subjects, so as to gain information, and endeavouring quietly to be of as much use to the Queen in her position as possible."²

Before the end of the financial year, which then terminated on the 5th of April, it became evident that the continued decline in the revenue would leave a deficit to be provided for of not less than £2,000,000; and this it was clear, from the depressed condition of trade, rendered vigorous and comprehensive changes in fiscal legislation indispensable. It was resolved to revert to Lord Althorp's proposals of ten years before greatly to reduce the import duties on timber and sugar, by which he calculated upon a gain of £1,300,000, and by the issue of exchequer bills the Finance Minister hoped to balance the estimated expenditure of the current year. But to give the relief to labour and the impulse to enterprise requisite to make so great an experiment with any reasonable chance of success, Mr. Baring recommended the abandonment of the sliding scale of imposts on foreign corn, and the substitution of a fixed duty of eight shillings a quarter. The Premier hesitated for some time to accede to a proposal in which his sagacity discerned the elements of party dissolution without the compensating advantage of a permanent settlement. The popular cry, not as yet loud, indeed, but already hoarse and deep, was for cheap bread and more employment, not for a uniform price of the quartern loaf, or a subsidiary tax that might be relied on to eke out a deficient revenue. All the statistics in the world could not persuade him that a majority of the owners and occupiers of land, and of the merchants and traders in towns, would return a majority to Parliament pledged to what was called at the time "this bundle of mixed goods for Protection to jump out of the window upon." If public credit could not be sustained and the public service kept up by the old ways of taxation, "the corn laws of course must go, and with them whoever proposed their abandonment." For the change would amount to an industrial if not to a political revolution, and could not be regulated or guided by a half-measure like this. The result abundantly verified these shrewd prognostics; but no statesman of eminence was yet prepared to advocate absolute free trade in food; and Lansdowne, Russell, Palmerston, and the rest of their colleagues believed that they were proposing as large a measure of concession in sugar and corn as public opinion would sanction. Their chief doubtingly and despondingly gave way to their reasonings. Lord John gave notice that he would move on the 7th of May to abolish the sliding scale of 1828, and to enact instead fixed duties of 8s. on wheat, 5s. on rye,

¹ 'Early Years of Queen Victoria,' p. 319.

² Letter to the Duke of Coburg, April 1841.

4s. 6d. on barley, and 3s. 4d. on oats; and as the sugar duties would expire unless renewed or modified, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the meanwhile was obliged to move resolutions embodying his contemplated reductions on that important necessary of life. A debate which lasted eight nights developed all the combined resources of the agricultural and colonial interests, which made instinctively common cause in defence of the principles of protection; and, under the leadership of Sir Robert Peel, in a House of 598 members, defeated the Government by a majority of thirty-six.

The Cabinet met to consider what was to be done. Melbourne, Lansdowne, and Labouchere were for resigning at once. The majority were in favour of an appeal to the country. Macaulay argued ingeniously that constitutional precedent justified a dissolution of a Parliament which had existed four years, and which had adopted most of the important measures introduced by Ministers; Lord John thought so too; and being outvoted on the question, Melbourne communicated the result of their deliberations to the Queen, and said: "Of course I felt I could but go with them; so we shall go on, bring in the old sugar duties, and then, if things are in a pretty good state, dissolve."¹

The rest of the session was consumed in angry but desultory discussions on the various aspects of the new financial policy which had been inaugurated, speeches being made on both sides rather with a view to the hustings than with any hope of convincing or converting an expiring Parliament. Several changes of minor importance were made in the Administration; one only requires to be noticed, particularly from the hitherto unexplained origin of the transaction and the part which Melbourne himself bore in it.

Lord Campbell describes the dejection caused by the supposed loss of office in 1839, and the revulsion of feeling when it was known that Sir Robert Peel had declined to form a ministry. He had submitted to be passed over when Bickersteth was made Master of the Rolls and Pepys was made Chancellor, in the hope that the chief place in one of the common law courts would be his reward. After an escape so narrow of losing his chance of promotion, he naturally urged his claims to consideration on the restored ministers, and especially on the Chancellor. A Council was appointed to be held at Windsor on the 30th of September. On his way thither, Lord Cottenham spoke strongly on the subject to Lord J. Russell, urging the reasonableness of room being made in Ireland, where the Attorney-General might be appointed Chancellor. Plunket had held the office for nine years, and though still well able to perform his judicial functions, he might possibly be induced without difficulty to retire. The leader of the Commons agreed to confer with the Premier, and some conversation took place in consequence between them. Melbourne was rather acquiescent than suggestive in the matter, but at the instance of the Chancellor he wrote confidentially to the Lord Lieutenant:—

¹ Martin's 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i. p. 107.

"We hear that Plunket would not be unwilling to retire, but nothing from himself or which can be implicitly relied on. I should be very unwilling to propose to him anything which could hurt his feelings or be inconsistent with his own objects or wishes. But it would be convenient to us if we could now get the Irish Seal for the Attorney-General. Do you know anything of Plunket's wishes, or do you know any means of sounding him without giving him uneasiness?"

Lord Ebrington enclosed a transcript of this inquiry in a letter from himself on the 15th of October, begging the Irish Chancellor "frankly and fairly to tell him what he felt on the subject." The venerable judge replied that, although "at his time of life the wish to retire would be a very natural one, he had never expressed such a wish to any person, nor at the present juncture should he have thought it becoming to withdraw himself from the discharge of public duty, either in Ireland or in Parliament. At the same time, it was quite clear that, after the communication of Lord Melbourne's wishes, he could not continue in office, but it was merely for that reason that he came to such a decision." He concluded with the assurance of his continued support of the Government out of office, and his undiminished sense of obligation for the favours conferred upon his family as well as the kindness shown to himself.

Melbourne was touched by the feeling and dignity of this reply, and wrote at once from Windsor :—

"It is impossible for me to express the deep concern I feel that this subject has ever been mentioned to you. Lord Ebrington wrote, as I doubt not that you are persuaded, with the best and kindest intentions towards both you and me, but all that I had asked him was, whether he had any reason to believe that the reports which reached me that you were desirous of retiring had any foundation. I can only assure you that I greatly rejoice that they are groundless ; that I most highly estimate the truly manly, honourable, and patriotic motives by which you are actuated ; that I should have considered your retirement at the present moment highly disadvantageous, both in point of character and strength, to the Government ; and for all these reasons I must earnestly entreat you to think of what has passed no more than if it never had taken place."¹

November term drew nigh, and the hale old man resumed his seat in the Court of Chancery, hearing arguments with the same impartial and discriminative care, and delivering judgments with the same lucidity as formerly : and when the day's work was done he might be seen walking home as usual with step quick and firm. No falling off was perceptible in his powers of body or of mind. He continued to command the confidence of suitors and the homage of the Bar, who, without respect of parties, recognised in him the most illustrious member of the profession. Rumours nevertheless crept into the public journals some time afterwards of his removal to make room for

¹ 'Life of Plunket,' vol. ii. pp. 330, 332.

Sir J. Campbell. It was certain that they did not proceed either from him or from the head of the Government, neither having any interest in their circulation, after what had passed. It was not so clear that others had as little motive for keeping alive the notion and familiarising the public mind with the suggested change. Still people were incredulous, and beyond a scornful contradiction in the Irish press during the year 1840, scarce any attention seemed to be drawn to the matter. Great was the amazement, therefore, when on the eve of the general election of 1841 the announcement was made by the Chancellor's Secretary, in the Hall of the Courts in Dublin, that Plunket had been called on to resign in order to make way for the English Attorney-General.

Remarkable as had been the vicissitudes of Plunket's career, no one could have anticipated the event by which it was destined to be closed. The general election was at hand, and if the Ministry were beaten they were pledged to resign. Full of years and honours, the Irish Chancellor could hardly reckon upon a renewal of his office; and had a reconstruction of the Government required his retirement with other veteran colleagues, he was not likely to demur. Meanwhile he used more than ordinary diligence to finish his list of causes, and in the course of Trinity Term had devoted himself successfully to clearing off arrears. Before his task was completed, he received a letter from the Viceroy reminding him of certain expressions on a former occasion that he would be content to vacate his office whenever it might be deemed essential for the Government to have it at their disposal, and intimating that the time had now arrived. Mortified at the too summary exaction of a promise which he had certainly offered as a waiver of personal interests for those of party, and not for the sake of merely gratifying the ambition of one whose claims he deemed far inferior to his own, he disdained to parley on the subject, and in a few significant words announced his removal to the Bar. Public surprise and anger were increased when the immediate object of the change transpired. The English Attorney-General claimed, as the reward of his long services, a peerage and a scat on the judicial bench; and as none of the chief judges in the Courts of Westminster would resign, it was thought room might be made for him at Dublin. The authorship of the suggestion was confidently assigned to the Premier, who, it was said, felt himself under obligations to Sir John Campbell which otherwise he could not discharge. The truth is, as already stated, it was Lord Cottenham who first broached the idea, not that Lord Plunket might be dismissed, but that he might possibly be persuaded to resign. He could not feign content in order that a stranger to the country and to the practice of equity should for a few weeks occupy his seat. His blunt disclosure of the way in which he had been treated might be deemed inconsiderate, but no consideration, he said, had been shown to him or to the profession of whose rights he had so long been the highest guardian. The nomination of Sir J. Campbell as a Keeper of the

Irish Seal was denounced by the press as a job, and by the profession as a wrong. The step, once publicly taken, could not be retraced, and Melbourne was not the man to throw the blame on others which by acquiescence he might be fairly held to share. But in reality neither the inception of the scheme or its accomplishment belonged to him.

In the last week of July the Queen and Prince were entertained by Lord and Lady Cowper at Panshanger, whence they proceeded on the morning of the 30th through Hertford and Welwyn to visit the Premier at Brocket. Numerous arches decked with laurel boughs, and gay with flowers, spanned the way; crowds of all classes in holiday garb coming forth to offer cordial greeting. The Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Palmerston, and Lady Lyttelton accompanied her Majesty in an open carriage, while his Royal Highness, attended by Lords de Grey, Palmerston, Cowper, and Charles Russell, were on horseback. The Queen seemed much struck with the beauty of the park and of the windings of the Lee through its noble glades. Under the great oaks and beeches near the house groups of young and old were gathered awaiting the youthful Sovereign, who they knew had their best friend for her chief Minister, but whom few of them had ever seen before. In front of the mansion he awaited the approach of the Queen, and upon her arrival conducted her Majesty through the principal rooms, and, after tendering a graceful welcome, had the honour of entertaining the royal party at luncheon. An hour was subsequently passed in noticing the pictures, several of which were interesting to her Majesty as recalling the memory of those with whom Melbourne had spent his early days. He had then the gratification of conducting her through a portion of the grounds, where the delight of the people broke forth in a gladness so loyal and affectionate that more than once he was visibly affected. He knew the end of his official career was nigh at hand; but it had been long, and this was a delicious sunset.

At the general election, two Conservatives were returned for the City, and though Lord J. Russell kept his seat, he was lowest on the poll. Lord Howick was beaten in Northumberland, Lords Melton and Morpeth in the West Riding, and Macaulay at Edinburgh. In Ireland the tide of opinion seemed to have likewise turned. O'Connell was rejected for the first time in Dublin, owing in no slight measure to the belief among certain classes that he had sanctioned the supersession of Plunket to make way for Sir J. Campbell. Most of the other Liberals of distinction in the three kingdoms were indeed re-elected, but the rank and file that so long had followed them were greatly thinned; and when the new Parliament met, it was obvious that a large majority in both Houses was prepared to vote want of confidence in the Administration.

Although the Queen was advised to recommend in the Speech from the Throne the consideration by the New Parliament "whether the laws regulating the trade in corn did not aggravate the natural fluctu-

ations of supply, and by their operation diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community," everybody knew that this advice would not be followed by the majority in either House.

The issue of the party struggle was indeed no longer doubtful, but it was resolved to uphold the great principle contended for to the last.

Lord Spencer, for the first time in the space of seven years, left his retirement to identify himself with his friends at the eve of their approaching fall. In moving the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, he not only indorsed the Free Trade Budget without reserve, but encountered with characteristic courage and directness the taunt of undiminishment of deficit, and consequently of undischarged debt, which, more than any other consideration, had outweighed in the public mind the inducements of cheaper timber, sugar, and corn. "It was true that the debt had somewhat increased, but wealth had increased in greater proportion. To augment this still further was the aim of the Government, who proposed not to increase, but revise taxation, by lowering restrictive duties and giving a freer course to the extension of commerce. The main peculiarity in existing circumstances was the pressure of taxation, and the most effectual way of meeting that pressure was to develop the national wealth, leaving the burthen of the debt to fall more lightly on the extended resources of the country."

With the exception of Brougham, who revelled in the contemplation of the fall of him who had so long kept him out of power, no influential peer took the trouble to discuss at any length the amendment to the Address. Melbourne's own indolence seemed to have already resumed its sway over him; he felt the end was come, that nothing he could say could possibly retard it for an hour, and that the expression of complaint or regret would only invite ridicule. He had held his great place longer than any man of his time; he had carried measures which he believed would be regarded as corner-stones in the modernised home of English freedom; he had taken off several oppressive and injurious taxes, and he quitted office without a hint being even murmured that he had appropriated to himself the smallest favour of the Crown. If these things were forgotten by the country, the country was not worth serving; if they were remembered, words from him were not wanting. Had he been an orator, the occasion would, no doubt, have tempted him to epitomise with pardonable pride the events of his seven years pilotage of the ship of state; but nature had not cast him in that mould, and the rhetoric art was not among his many gifts. Speaking in the Commons, even when a young man, had been to him troublesome, and in the Peers, even at the height of his power, had always been an effort he would gladly have avoided. Why should he be at the pains to make the exertion now? and yet because he would not be at the pains to get up a display of fireworks for his own official obsequies, he has been scoffed at by the man of all others

whom he gratified and served, not wisely, but too well.¹ The vote which closed his ministerial career was carried by a majority of seventy-two in the Upper House, and at five in the morning of the 28th of August, the House of Commons decided by a majority of ninety-one in favour of Mr. Wortley's motion. By the Queen's desire, Melbourne repaired to Windsor on the same evening, and resigned his trust. "He praised the speeches of Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel,"² he betrayed no appearance of depression or chagrin, and spoke only of the coming change with some degree of anxiety as it might occasion trouble and uneasiness to her Majesty. "For four years," he said, "I have seen you every day; but it is so different now to what it would have been in 1839: the Prince understands everything so well."³ Next morning, when he took leave, the Queen was much affected. Writing soon afterwards to King Leopold, her Majesty said:

"I cannot resist copying for you what Lord Melbourne wrote to me the evening after we parted. He had already praised Albert greatly to me before he took leave of me. 'Lord Melbourne cannot satisfy himself without again stating to your Majesty in writing what he had the honour of saying to your Majesty respecting his Royal Highness the Prince. Lord Melbourne has formed the highest opinion of his Royal Highness's judgment, temper, and discretion, and he cannot but feel a great consolation and security in the reflection that he leaves your Majesty in a situation in which your Majesty has the inestimable advantage of such advice and assistance. Lord Melbourne feels certain that your Majesty cannot do better than have recourse to it whenever it is needed, and rely upon it with confidence.' This naturally gave me great pleasure, and made me very proud, as it comes from a person who is no flatterer, and would not have said it, if he did not think so or feel so."⁴

In contemplation of the change of Administration which at length seemed inevitable, Prince Albert had conferred with Melbourne in May on the expediency of coming beforehand to some understanding with respect to reconstituting the female portion of the Household, so as to avoid all semblance of cause for complaint on the part of the new Government, while maintaining the consistency of the Queen's declaration in 1839 that the exclusion of female friends of her youth formed no part of the duty or right of the incoming Ministry. Melbourne thought it would suffice if the near relatives of members of the Cabinet should retire, and that the other ladies of the bedchamber should remain; and he undertook that there would be no difficulty about the former portion of the arrangement if the latter was acquiesced in. Mr. Anson was accordingly instructed to communicate with Sir Robert Peel, who at once gave his assent; and before the transfer of

¹ Campbell: 'Lives of Lyndhurst and Brougham,' p. 518.

² Queen's Journal.

³ Idem, p. 117.

⁴ Idem.

power actually took place, the Duchess of Sutherland tendered her resignation as Mistress of the Robes, and the Duchess of Bedford and the Marchioness of Normanby theirs as Ladies-in-Waiting. The Countess of Charlemont and Lady Portman retained their positions in the household.

The new arrangements being complete, the outgoing ministers attended at Claremont and resigned their seals of office; Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues were then admitted to kiss hands.

On taking his seat upon the woolsack for the fourth time, Lyndhurst unexpectedly betrayed some embarrassment. In seven years' vacation he had not grown younger, and never having been by study versed in precedents or forms, he had in the interval forgotten much. In the heyday of his prime he got up the judicial ritual with marvellous quickness, and with histrionic ease and grace performed his part to perfection. But ever indolent, and from long habit idle, he forgot that technicalities are apt to slip from the memory without one knowing it; and when at sixty-nine he had to robe and act again, though summoned, they would not come. To his own surprise, no doubt, as much as to that of others, he faltered, used the wrong words occasionally, mended the error, and then he looked chagrined. Who would think, said Melbourne, observing him, that this is the same impudent dog who bullied us so unconscionably in his "Reviews of the Session?" There was, however, but little to be done in that brief September interval; and by the time Parliament met for business in the spring, the Chancellor was once more perfect in his imposing part.¹

After his resignation, Melbourne spent some weeks in Derbyshire. Several addresses from influential persons acknowledged the many useful measures carried by his Administration. The self-elected corporations of nearly every town in the kingdom had been replaced by councils chosen by a broad constituency of ratepayers; a legal provision for the poor established in Ireland; the criminal code amended; and cheap postage for the first time attained. The address from Derby was presented by Dr. Forrester, that from Melbourne by Mr. Haines.

"Both to you who have done me the great honour to come hither from the enlightened and opulent town of Derby, and to you who are my immediate neighbours and friends in this place and its vicinity, I am anxious to express the deep sense of satisfaction with which I receive this testimony of your confidence and approbation. It is very natural that you should revert to, and I have great gratification in remembering, the autumn of the year 1834, when I had the honour of receiving you, in this very place, upon a similar occasion. Some of those who now stand before me were then present; and they will probably recollect that I took the liberty of impressing upon them the necessity of union and concord, and of warning them that, considering the natural strength and compact array of our adversaries, there was

¹ Campbell: 'Life of Lyndhurst,' p. 132.

no hope of success except in combined and unanimous exertion (loud cries of 'Hear, hear!') Those sentiments were, as I flattered myself, received at the time with concurrence and approbation. They were more than approved. They were adopted and acted upon, and the usual consequence of success ensued (cheers). Since that time, in other parts of the country, discords and differences of opinion have arisen, which have also been followed by their natural and necessary consequences—defeat and failure. It gives me, therefore, great satisfaction to find that in your address you repeat and confirm that opinion, by stating that 'in a free and enlightened nation the firm and united voice of the people, when constitutionally directed to just and legitimate objects, cannot long be resisted.' You are right, gentlemen. Union alone is irresistible, and union can only be insured by the choice of defined objects; not doubtful, speculative, and hazardous, but dictated by reason, approved by experience, and of a practicable character. I have the more pleasure in referring to that former period, because I have to render you the justice of declaring that you have acted entirely up to the principles which you then professed. Whether we have done our duty or not, you have done yours. In the exercise of your rights and franchises you gave to the late Government which you trusted, a steady, firm, unvarying support, and I cannot refrain from observing, that if the same consistent line of conduct had been pursued by other constituencies, the result of the late political contest would have been different from that which has taken place. Both the addresses contain expressions of kindly feeling towards myself personally, by which I am sensibly touched. More than seven years have now elapsed since that month of November, 1834, to which I have already so often recurred, and the progress of time has brought upon me, what it must bring upon all, impaired strength, less buoyant spirits, and diminished powers of exertion. The consciousness of this decline naturally renders me less ambitious of undertaking a post of so much labour, such heavy responsibility, and such unceasing anxiety, as that which I have lately held; but the deep debt of gratitude which I owe to my Sovereign and my country will not permit me to withdraw myself from their service, nor to refuse any task which may appear likely to conduce to their interest and welfare. The great questions relating to the commerce and revenue of the country, which were in appearance the causes of the dissolution of the late Ministry, remain yet to be determined. The financial difficulties of the State have not been the work of this or of that Administration; they have been foreseen, or rather they have existed ever since, and indeed long before, the termination of the great war with France in 1815, and they are the consequence of a long series of events, into which it is vain to inquire, except as a question for the future, whether they could have been avoided or prevented. The state of trade, foreign and domestic, and the severe distress which prevails in many of the manufacturing districts, although I should lament that either should be exaggerated for political purposes, and employed

as a ground and reason for political change, still imperiously demand the most serious and immediate attention of the Government and the Legislature. It was our opinion that the measures which we proposed, and which you have enumerated, were calculated at once to supply the pecuniary deficiency and to relieve the commercial embarrassment. We proposed them in good faith and with the hope that the greater portion of them would have received the sanction of Parliament. They were summarily opposed. A distinct declaration of want of confidence in the Administration was carried in the House of Commons. We advised an appeal to the people, which was made, and it has been decided against us. It will now be for her Majesty's present advisers to bring forward upon their part such plans as they may think better suited to the circumstances of the times. And it will be for your representatives to consider those plans with reference to, and in comparison with, the measures which we submitted to the last Parliament; I can only say that for myself they shall receive a full and fair consideration, and that as far as in me lies, we will do to others that justice which I hold to have been denied to me and my colleagues, and in being denied to us, to have also been denied to the country."

An admirable sketch by H. B., lifelike and characteristic, with an air of most delicate ridicule about it, suggested a soliloquy of the ousted minister. He was portrayed in a careless attitude, ruminating aloud on the late eviction from the Palace of the young intruder whose dexterous curiosity made his name for a time a household word. "That boy Jones must be a very clever fellow! To make his way into the palace once, or twice was not so extraordinary; I have done as much as that myself: but how he managed to get in the third time; I wish I knew his secret."¹ Well might Croker say, when commenting on the tardily accomplished change of parties, "*The Times* and H. B. have done it all."

Being wholly without gall, jealousy, or rancour, Melbourne forgave easily injury repented of, and condoned all kinds of offence, where he was himself only concerned, without effort on his own part or humiliation on that of others. A pending dispute was, in fact, to him a bore; and it was a positive relief to be rid of it. He cared nothing about having the best of an argument, and very little that people said the next day he had had the superiority. A great deal better not to have had it, he thought, if wounded self-importance chafed at defeat; or conviction of error turned a useful or pleasant acquaintance into a muffled enemy. Yet he had not in him a spice of calculating or sinister dissimulation. He could put on upon occasion a fitting garb of courtesy and deference. But neither in the Senate nor at Court could he attune his voice to flattery; even with women it was not his way. In friendship or in love none could be more tender, ardent, or caressing; he did not try to hide the tears that sympathy with grief or misery drew

¹ H. B., No. 705; October 1841.

from him ; and for beauty, wit, gracefulness, and by all that enters into the magic of fascination he was ready to be led captive and to own it. No heat of quarrel, no promulgation of estrangement, no reciprocity of reproaches made him forget the qualities by which he had been once spell-bound. With his wife, the most provoking of unhelpmates, he made it up more than once when she asked him after open separation to love her once again ; and despite the stare and jeer it might occasion, he seldom spoke of her without implying directly or indirectly, that to the last she had more ascendancy over him than any other human being.

Between colleagues who got wrong with each other he was uniformly a peacemaker, and he was rather proud of constructing bridges, sometimes rickety enough and built of the oddest materials, by which the rift in friendship might be overpassed. He had his own troubles in this respect where Foreign Affairs were concerned ; for Palmerston, elated with a continuance of success, was often overbearing in council, and to the representatives of foreign powers supercilious and haughty. All complaints, whether of supposed neglect or insolence, came to him, and he was ever prompt to soothe the irritability of diplomatic self-esteem, and to engage that the matter should be explained. Sometimes it proved to be inexplicable. In the main Palmerston was generally in the right, and all that could be done was to get him to say or write something civil, or where that was unattainable, to write and say the civil things without asking his assent beforehand. In 1840 the Cabinet nearly broke up upon the Syrian Question, and with a different kind of man for Premier it is probable that either Palmerston or Holland would have quitted the Government before the Quadruple Treaty was signed. The Foreign Secretary's sagacity and determination triumphed without any breach, political or personal, and when the peril was over the generosity and good-humour of Holland rejoiced candidly at the result.

It has been said that an attitude more dignified, if not dictatorial, would have been more befitting a First Minister. Whether the bearing and demeanour which characterised Walpole, Pitt, Grenville, or Peel is really of advantage to the public service may be questioned. What is the great praise, after all, of being dogmatic and domineering in secondary affairs, if in the weightier matters of the law, whereby the national fate is principally determined, the imperious will is found liable to give way ? Be this, however, as it may, we know that in the main constitutional progress has been made by conference and mutual suasion, and what the ignorance of fools is ready to call compromise, but what is really the fine and subtle harmony wrought by consummate skill out of seeming discord ; compared with which the iteration of a dominant note, however clear, or the voice of a trumpet, however loud, is not so very admirable or commendable. But for Melbourne to have assumed any other position than that of *primus inter pares* would have been ridiculous and in truth impossible. Earl Grey, with more pretension and prestige, seldom ventured to avow how much

wiser and better than his colleagues he believed himself to be ; and when at last, in a fit of ill-temper, he resigned because he could not impose his opinion on a divided Cabinet, he was, to his great astonishment, allowed to drop out of the Government, every one else remaining in ; and he had the mortification of seeing his neglected prophecies of evil remain unfulfilled. Melbourne had, without theorising on the subject, formed the conviction that the Administration to be constitutional, respected, and strong, must be representative. He studied with care the conflicting interests and influences of chief note and weight in the community ; and as far as prejudices and jealousies and difficulties of all kinds would permit, he endeavoured that all should have a voice, more or less audible, in the Government. Having done so, he neither expected or desired unanimity in council. That would have been to him cause for suspicion and uneasiness ; he liked discussion as much as he abhorred dispute ; and each of his colleagues knew that he was always accessible to frank and free expostulation, argument, and advice.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CLOSING YEARS.

Disenchantment and depression—Ill-health—Anti-Corn Law League—Renewed agitation in Ireland—Disintegration of Peelism—Friends in power without him—Illness and death.

ON the first day of the Session of 1842 Brougham took his seat on the front bench next to Melbourne, just as he had done seven years before, chatting and conferring with his former friends all round whether they would or not. From that position he spoke of the notorious bribery of the last general election, apportioning the blame without fear, favour, or affection, to the supporters of the party now in power, "over and against whom he had the honour to stand, and the party in Opposition in the front rank of which he had the honour to take his place." (Hear, hear, and a laugh from Lord Melbourne.) "He was at a loss to know what was meant by the interruption. Was his noble friend lately at the head of the Government annoyed at the term Opposition?" Melbourne retorted by reminding his implacable friend that so transcendent and impartial an arbiter of all legislative measures ought not to declare himself beforehand a leader of Opposition. In the good old times men were not ranged in accordance with plighted vows of party. He could recollect, when a member of the other House, a gentleman being called to order for designating some

one as a member of the Opposition, and the Speaker ruling that the epithet was irregular.

During the Session he spoke frequently; criticising the details of the Income Tax Bill, and that for the reconstruction of the sliding scale of duties on corn; urging the necessity of an amendment of the Marriage Law in Ireland, and of inquiry into the employment of women and children in collieries and mines. He attended regularly the sittings of the Upper House, and to casual observers did not seem wanting in the performance of the various duties of leadership. But for himself he could not conceal the loss of significance in all he said,—the comparative unimportance of what he did or what he thought.

Life from this time was no longer enjoyable as it once had been. Not that the means of enjoyment failed, or that the zest for pleasure flagged. In company he was still excitable and the cause of excitement in others; he fell in with the humour of those around him if cultivated and congenial, not easily or unresistingly, but rather as acid and alkali mixed by the affinity that sparkles and bubbles over in genial effervescence. His reply to Lady Holland, when she undertook to explain some passing puzzle of the day, or to lay down the unwritten law of taste or right upon some new question, was "No, no, I don't think so at all:" and they would fence and spar and give one another kind knocks, but all in the assured freedom and frankness of mutual confidence that nothing on neither side could wound or mar. Listeners to the brisk and not unfrequently brusque argument often feared it would come to altercation, and so in fact, or form at least, it sometimes did. Her vehemence would now and then get off the regular track, and for a while seem to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of exaggeration; but in a moment after their colloquy was ambling along as pleasantly as before, in badinage without bridle. Hours thus spent were still sunny and warm; but the warmth had not the once lasting glow. In her pungent and often provokingly petulant or insufferably insolent talk, he found amusement to the last. They fought over books and dishes, foreign envoys whom every one had forgotten but themselves, and court foibles of a day gone by that had escaped the gleaners of scandal. She was one of the few people whom he would ever allow to speak to him of her who had been, as he said, the most exquisite charm and keenest trial of his life: and understanding him thoroughly, Lady Holland was careful never to ruffle the placid surface of remembrance by thoughtless word or tone. Lord Holland's name, encircled with associations all of them bright, noble, and tender, continually recurred; and was a theme of endless resuscitation and revival of pleasant memories. The void he had left politically and personally could never be supplied, and the gap in the social circle never could be filled. Nobody, indeed, was ever suspected of aspiring to take his place: colleague and wife would have equally hated him who attempted to do so.

But the collapse, when, long sustained excitement abruptly ended, no new pursuit or passion takes its place,—let no man talk of what it

is or what its consequences, mental or material are, who has not experienced it. The professional or commercial slave to gainful drudgery says he is glad to escape from the daily round of toil grown irksome because he has sold the goodwill of his business, or got an appointment for life, or come into the enjoyment of landed estate by inheritance. Such a man has only exchanged one form of solicitude for another, and generally speaking a comparatively subordinate for a higher species of anxiety, less physical labour for novel burthens of dignity. There is nothing in common between this every-day change of condition upwards or onwards, and the fall of a sensitive and excitable statesman. If young and dissipated like Fox, he may console himself with gaming, flirtation, and demagoguism. If phlegmatic and still in the prime of life, like Peel, he may find occupation in agricultural experiments, and the gradual reconstruction of a party in opposition, preparatory to the recovery of power with firmer authority than before. If he be a man of letters and an orator like Thiers, he may vary the excitement of historic composition with that of harangues on great occasions, making his supplanters quail and all Christendom hearken. But where such alternatives are wanting the loss of power held long enough to have become habitual is a sentence of privation that a proud man will not complain of, but that a susceptible man can no more help feeling acutely than he can be indifferent to the pain of unsatisfied hunger day after day. It took three years of supercilious sulk to debilitate the faculties and nerves of Pitt; so that when he humbled himself to regain office, a few months of it broke him down. The fret of bootless repining smote Napoleon's body with disease incurable so that he died. Melbourne was made of fibre less tough. He had lived less in and by himself than greater men—more in the society and on the sympathy of others. He had not used power to realise whims and desires of his own, but rather to gratify or benefit his friends, his party, and his country. And now, when he could do so no longer, and day after day he missed the upward look in private and public that he had been accustomed to, and heard no more the familiar echo of his name at court or council, in Parliament or press, and found the postman pass his door, and troops of devoted partisans forget to ask his opinion, there stole over him in spite of himself a sense of slow death, ineffable and irresistible. First he would not recognise the fact even to himself, and for a good while he strove not to let a trace of chagrin be detected in his air or tone by society. He could still be versatile and charming at table, still pleasant, satirical, or gossiping in *tête-à-tête*. But in the lengthening intervals of solitude the chilly gloom came back, ever chillier and gloomier.

Then all was blank, and bleak, and grey,
It was not night, it was not day,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness without a place.
A silence and a stirless breath
That neither was of life or death.

A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless.

Books, old and new, but especially the former, he devoured insatiably as ever—with his eyes : but not as of yore, with intentness of scrutiny to get at what was in them, or, as he used to do more recently, with the desire of being amused by them. Buried in his easy-chair, he seemed to pore over the last volume of despatches, or the last translation from the Greek, or some revised tome of Patristic divinity ; but he suspected when he sauntered forth into the air that a good deal of it had gone for nothing, his thoughts being far away.

His nervous system became thoroughly unstrung, and his hitherto unbroken physical strength gave way. Without any premonitory symptoms perceptible to those around him, on Sunday, the 23rd of October, he was suddenly attacked by illness, being for some hours almost insensible. His sister, who happened to be in town, was quickly summoned to his side by Lord Beauvale, who was staying with him at the time. When relieved by medical aid, he became painfully conscious of the benumbing sense of weakness which lingers after all other traces of paralytic seizure have disappeared. He continued steadily to improve, but for more than a fortnight was unable to leave his room. Palmerston wrote from Brocket that “he thought his progress towards convalescence very satisfactory;”¹ and when able to re-join his guests at table, the congenial circle included Lady Holland, Mr. Millbank and his nephew Mr. W. Cowper. As he gradually revived he would sometimes try to talk unconcernedly of his illness, saying “it was only a runaway knock, but that he did not care to know the fellow who gave it.” No one, however, who was familiar with his features could fail to observe how much he had aged in a short time.

In the session of 1843, Melbourne once more took his place as leader of Opposition, but his look and mien was sadly changed. The easy grace of movement and quiet play of humorous expression were observable no more. The traces of recent shock to his once powerful frame were not to be mistaken in the inelastic gait and worn features. Intimates who conversed with him on public business reported his sagacity to be still clear, and his judgment unimpaired. Yet he declined to speak, instinctively aware that the bow once so supple would not bend as it was wont to do, and sensitively afraid that the deterioration should appear. At the solemnities of Aberdeen and the whimsicalities of Brougham he would still laugh ; and when the Duke of Wellington and Lyndhurst came at length to own that the principles of policy they had driven him from power for professing were legislatively indispensable to the preservation of order and of peace, the old fire flashed from his deep-set eye ; and to use the phrase applied by

¹ Letter to Lord Lansdowne, from Brocket, November 13th, 1842.

Sheil to another noble nature in decline, "humour played harmlessly about his lips like summer lightning." The fearless love of right for its own sake, and the abounding readiness of sympathy and the comprehensive good-nature were still there, like finely proportioned arches of a stately pile : though dilapidation had begun, it was not yet overthrown.

Ministers were content with a resolution in the Commons expressing satisfaction at the settlement of the dispute respecting the boundary of Maine. In the Lords, Brougham would not be satisfied without a vote of personal compliment to Lord Ashburton for the ability with which he had executed his commission. For the noble envoy he cared little ; but he had obligations of spite to the ex-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, which he was eager to discharge. He looked on Palmerston as one of those who, in the dark, had thrown a shell, at Melbourne's bidding, upon the heap, that excluded him from power ; and to wreak his resentment for this life-long injury, all other recollections and considerations must give way. Palmerston no doubt concurred in the justice of his ostracism, or at all events in its necessity ; but he had never come into collision with the "Banished Lord," as H.B. used to call him ; and upon the great question of Slavery abolition they were probably more in accord than any other two men of Cabinet rank in their day. It was in fact a common phrase among their contemporaries, that neither was quite accountable for his actions where the Black Man was concerned. Palmerston's vehemence, however, in denouncing the Ashburton Treaty, and his failure to induce any powerful section of politicians to take his view of it, was a temptation irresistible to the great libertine in mockery and vituperation. He disclaimed, of course, any personal ill-will or even disrespect for his former colleague ; but that did not prevent his pouring vial after vial of candid condemnation on his head, and then rubbing his reputation dry with raillery of the roughest texture. Next time they met Palmerston talked and laughed just the same as usual. That was his way.

In the course of the previous year agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws had gradually spread from the seats of manufacture to the seaports, and from Manchester to the Metropolis. A series of influential meetings took place in Covent Garden Theatre during the following spring, and it was doubtful no longer how the balance of urban opinion inclined. On the other side were said to be arrayed in serried ranks all the weight and influence of the community that lived by land ; owners in fee and rent-chargers, mortgagees in possession and copyholders, tenants under lease and tenants at will ; auditors of rents and farm bailiffs, gardeners and day labourers. The agricultural interest, one and indivisible, were said to hold out resolutely for the maintenance of protection as the girdle of their well-being. Wages would fall if the price of bread came down ; and wages were too low already. Rents could not be reduced because of the fixed charges that had to be paid : and rents were hard enough to pay already. Costly improvements could not be attempted if owners and occupiers

were bereft of the gains won in seasons of high prices ; and instead of swamp and common being brought under the plough, vast tracts of light land heretofore tilled under the pressure of Act of Parliament, must go out of cultivation. All this was reiterated by most noble and right honourable statesmen at Westminster and elsewhere, until a Free-Trade administration was turned out of office, and a Cabinet of Protectionists was installed in their room : and all this continued to be repeated day by day as part of the liturgy of county patriotism. Some great Whig proprietors, like Lords Fitzwilliam and Spencer, the Duke of Bedford and Lord Radnor, raised their protest firmly against marshalling in antagonism the interests of country and town. They saw afar off and were sad at the humiliation in store for their order, and the needless suffering and apprehension that must be undergone by the tenant class in a struggle prolonged for party objects, which could only end in their desertion and discomfiture. But most of the counties had returned representatives pledged to keep up the price of bread by law ; and so long as a community of nine millions, industrious and loyal in their habits, and having for their spokesmen the bulk of the nobility, gentry and clergy of the realm, presented an unbroken force of political and social resistance to legislative change, it was not easy to see how by peaceable means that change could be accomplished. The League might print tons of pamphlets on the logical sequence of steadier rents and higher wages from wider employment and cheaper bread ; but the uneducated ploughman, and the half-educated farmer, and the ill-educated squire would not read a word of them though strewn on the causeway of every market town, and shed as thick as autumn leaves on every village green. No new cause has ever forced its way through the thorn hedges of social prejudice by the mere diffusion of useless, that is of unused, knowledge. The sympathetic voice of personal suasion is the music without which proselytism makes no way. Mechanical devices, especially those of the printing press, are indeed marvellous and measureless in their power of repeating the echoes of truth ; but for truth to be spoken so that it will reach the hearts of men, before all things it is necessary that it should be uttered in clear and audible voice by a true and brave man. Such a man was Richard Cobden ; and when it had become evident that the towns were for free trade but that the counties were still claimed by its opponents, it seemed to him to be a duty indispensable and imperative to go, as he said, "unto the agricultural Gentiles." As a farmer's son, he could not be repelled as one ignorant of rural wants and difficulties ; and none could listen to the thrilling earnestness and fearless sincerity of his appeals to the class from which he was sprung, without being sent home to think whether, after all, there could be any genuine security or true prosperity for the cultivators of the soil while their chief profits were felt to be so much lost by their fellow-countrymen.

How Hertfordshire happened to be the first county to whose people a public appeal was made may be told in a few words. Charles

Higby Lattimore had for many years held the Place Farm on the Brocket Hall estate, as his father had done before him. Being a man of spirit and intelligence, superior to most of his class, he had in 1829 taken a separate farm from a neighbouring proprietor without a lease, but with an understanding, reduced to writing, that if he redeemed it from a neglected condition, and brought it into a state of more productive tilth, and then were served with notice to quit, after having made improvements which the subsequent crops had not sufficiently compensated him for, the property should be looked over by two efficient men of business, each party appointing one, and that they should decide what allowance should be made on that account. Notwithstanding this engagement, the rent was arbitrarily raised £70 a year; and because he refused to vote with the proprietor at the contested election of 1841, he was served with a notice to leave. Other occupiers had been dealt with similarly, and he believed that sympathy would be kindled, even though at first it blazed not high, were attention publicly called to the instability of the letting prices of land, and the uncertainty of its tenure, intensified if not wholly caused by the artificial system of protection. A deputation from the League invited the farmers to a public meeting, on the 29th of April, 1843, in the town of Hertford, to discuss the question of the Corn Laws, and after an address by Mr. Cobden, an animated debate arose which ended in a free trade resolution, moved by Mr. Lattimore, being adopted. This was an aggravation of the sin of territorial mutiny not to be forgiven, and the claim of compensation for permanent improvements which had increased the letting value of his farm seven shillings an acre was repudiated by the owner as not enforceable at law.¹

In his seclusion the veteran politician took note of what was going on, formed his own judgment, according to his wont, of men and things. Many of the doctrines promulgated on League platforms were little to his mind. He had not yet come to recognise as inevitable the total and immediate reversal of the policy which Canning and Goderich, Huskisson and Grey, Peel and Graham, had concurred in sanctioning, but he discerned the great change that was coming over the national mind, and occupied himself in pondering deeply and dispassionately the consequences that must ensue. In the personal controversy above referred to, he sympathised warmly with Mr. Lattimore, whom he knew to be the best of tenants, and with whom he spent many an hour in friendly talk regarding public affairs. To the end of his life that was his way; he loved to listen to the free and vigorous utterance of practical views upon any subject of importance, whether he agreed with them in all respects or not; and he relished peculiarly the firm but moderate tone of a man who, even when smart-

¹ 'A Plea for Tenant Right, addressed to the tenant farmers of Hertfordshire, showing the existing obstructions to an improved system of agriculture and the necessity of legal security for the capital of the occupiers of the soil.' By C. H. Lattimore.

ing under recent wrong, never forgot his consistency and self-respect. Far from deprecating Lattimore's desire publicly to vindicate the claim of tenant right, when asked whether certain adverse statements ought to be allowed to go uncontradicted, he asked to see the agreement about which the dispute had arisen and the correspondence to which it had led, and then said with emphasis, "On the contrary you owe it to yourself, and to your neighbours, who respect you, to vindicate the independence of your conduct and the justice of your claim." On the occasion of a visit to Place Farm,¹ when he was accompanied by Lord Beauvale, he said that he intended to reside for the future chiefly at Bocket, and that he wanted to know how he could do most good to the people about him. Mr. Lattimore replied "that as labour was then superabundant, especially in the autumn and winter, nothing would be more beneficial than giving employment to the women in the Park in weeding, etc., and to the men desiring work in trenching and planting at a fair rate of wages. This plan was adopted forthwith, as were other works of usefulness to the neighbourhood, to which he never failed to contribute liberally."

In November the Queen and the Prince Consort visited Sir Robert Peel at Drayton and the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, where many guests of distinction, including Melbourne, were assembled. By her Majesty's desire he soon afterwards spent some days at Windsor,² Lord and Lady Beauvale being invited at the same time. On leaving the Castle he proceeded to Broadlands, where he remained some days. At the end of January he returned to South Street, and announced his intention of taking part in the business of the Session, his health being, as was hoped, much restored. He entertained several of his old friends at dinner, and his former spirits often revived in the congeniality of the company he liked. But except at Holland House and Carlton Gardens, he seldom dined out—perhaps from an unconfessed misgiving as to the permanence of his recovery; or because he found it easier to adhere to the regimen prescribed for him by Sir Henry Holland, without attracting observation: for his sensitiveness seemed to have concentrated all its defensive activity around the point of weakness, any casual exposure of which pained him to the quick. He could not yet relinquish the hope of regaining some share of political power. It was far too late to think of turning to other pursuits. His zest for many things he had once enjoyed was gone; speculative inquiry no longer stirred his curiosity, and what once was pleasure no more pleased. The fire was gone out, as he said, when found gloomily alone, and unless he was summoned to take part in active business he should never feel warm again. But he knew that the probability of his being called upon depended on betraying no incapacitating weakness, even to those who had once hung upon his smile and still termed themselves inalienable friends. At

¹ March 28th.

² From the 15th to the 18th of December.

best his party had been barely strong enough to hold their own, when his hand was firm and faith in his dexterity unshaken. Whatever they might affect to say to him, or one another, they never would come back to him, or ask him to join with them should the opportunity arise of endeavouring to regain power. But though relatives and intimates instinctively understood how to avoid nettling his susceptibility, mere acquaintances in thoughtless words, and political antagonists by inquisitive glances, kept the wound half-hidden green : and with all his habitual self-command, he was unable when he appeared in his place in the Lords to act the vigorous and unprompted part he had so long and until so lately filled without acting. He who had been the most provokingly easy-going of ministers when the burthen of empire was upon him, now that he had no burthen but his own to bear was perceptibly not at ease. When consulted he was as clear, when amused he laughed as heartily as ever ; but he no longer challenged controversy or kindled merriment as he used to do. When left to himself he sank ; and unconsciously betrayed his depression, when his opinion was not asked : he suspected neglect, said he was tired, and went away. The companion whose ever-active sympathy would have seen through all this, and with the tenderness of a woman watched to mitigate and soothe its pain, was no longer by his side ; and though there were many staunch and some discerning friends remaining, "there was no one left like Holland." Throughout the Session he hardly spoke ; and felt relieved when it was over.

Time with its many changes and vicissitudes had not indurated his nature, or rendered him unwilling to be reminded of early associations, of past pleasure rather than of pride. The writer of Brummel's Memoirs wrote asking his permission to publish the verses written by him when a young man about town in the Beau's album, and of which it may readily be believed he had no accurate remembrance. He did not ask to see a copy, but simply said that he could have no objection to the insertion of any poetry of his in the intended work which might add to its interest, provided it was not injurious to the feelings of others.

During the summer of 1843, agitation in Ireland, for the Repeal of the Union, which had slumbered for more than a decade, suddenly burst forth anew, in tones and with incidents that riveted the unwilling attention of politicians in and out of power. O'Connell, who had spent the previous year in the calm, discreet, and assiduous performance of the duties of Lord Mayor of Dublin, carried a resolution in the Town Council in favour of a domestic legislature ; and, desiring to strengthen himself when next preferring the claim in Parliament, he suggested that the people of each county should meet in the open air and say if they were satisfied with the working of the Act of 1801. To his surprise and delight, instead of an ordinary response to his summons, he was everywhere met with demonstrations multitudinous and enthusiastic, characterised by a self-imposed discipline of sobriety and order so complete, that even with all his mature experience of popular

emotion he was beguiled into believing, that the prolonged silence of the Government indicated their intention, as in 1829, at the last moment to give way. He was summarily undeceived by the issue of a proclamation on the 6th of October forbidding a great assemblage near the capital, where those on horseback were desired to muster and form, without arms, in cavalry order. Large masses of troops had been concentrated to enforce obedience to the Viceroy's interdict, and the congregating peasantry peaceably dispersed. O'Connell and six of his friends were arrested and held to bail on a charge of exciting sedition; the lawyers found occupation for many months in debating before the tribunals how far it was an offence at common law to seek to overawe the Government by peaceful manifestations of physical force: and the sanguine hope of seeing a Parliament once more sitting in College Green silently withered away. Melbourne marked attentively the growth of the popular illusion, the abrupt measures by which it was dispelled, and the judicial scandals by which it was unsuccessfully attempted to revive the obsolete doctrines of constructed conspiracy. He thought the executive inexcusable in mutely suffering a credulous people to drift to the brink of abortive revolt, and then suddenly turning upon them with sabres drawn and cannon loaded. The peril over, he thought it a blunder of the kind that is worse than a crime, to try by oppressive prolixities of indictment, by specious straining of obscure maxims of law, and, above all, by resort to the jugglery of jury-packing, to amerce and imprison a man whom the popular mind on both sides of the Channel still regarded with admiration and sympathy. In the intervals of the Anaconda controversy, as it was called, the versatile tribune appeared at vast Anti-Corn Law gatherings in Manchester and London; and as he said himself, "He did not think he was ever better received in Patrick-shire." By the time his sentence was reversed on appeal to the House of Lords, the dazzling dream of dissolving the Union by dint of threatening eloquence and tremendous cheering had once more passed away. But the legal discomfiture of ministers was, upon the other hand, signal and complete; and the more thoughtful amongst them thenceforth began to cherish schemes for the unconfessed reconstruction of their Irish policy on a basis of religious concession. The Charitable Trusts Act secured Catholic endowments and recognised Catholic dignities and titles, to the bitter grief of Exeter Hall; while the measure for the increased endowment of Maynooth filled the high places of No Popery with despair. The disintegration of Peelism had visibly set in; and regardless of remonstrance, warning, and gibe, the process was steadily pursued, sincerely but suicidally by its author.

A surplus of £1,400,000 was available on the revenue for the year ending the 5th of April, and Sir Robert Peel resolved to avail himself of the opportunity for reducing the duty on East India sugar. The West India interest took the alarm; and the hearts of other Protectionists among his followers misgave them as they observed one buttress after another of the system of preference and prohibition

swept away. They resolved to support an amendment moved by Mr. Miles, which was carried by a majority of twenty in a full House on the 14th of June. Sir Robert Peel refused to bow to this decision, and summoning a meeting of his party, gave them to understand that if they did not approve of his policy and would not be led by his advice he was ready to resign. Eventually most of the seceders agreed to acquiesce in what had plainly become inevitable ; for a change of Government would manifestly have worsened rather than bettered their condition. On the 18th instant they consequently suffered the vote to be reversed, and from that day felt the knell of Protection had sounded.

The occasion was rendered memorable by the first words of open rebuke and reproach, in which Mr. Disraeli repudiated the leadership of Sir Robert Peel. For fifteen years no sounds of mutiny had publicly been heard in the Conservative camp, all personal jealousies and grievances being stifled by feelings of enmity, in common, to ascendant Liberalism. But with increased freedom of discussion, and a quickened sense of accountability to constituents, the old ways of administrative rule had gradually become impracticable. Mr. Pitt or Mr. Perceval at the head of a great majority had difficulties at Court or in Cabinet, when about to take an unwelcome or unexpected course ; but these "secret and confidential" thwartings overcome, the Minister had none of importance to fear from his followers. Even so late as 1828, when the long-opposed repeal of the Test Act was agreed to over-night by the Duke of Wellington's Cabinet, no serious complaint, far less any seceding menace, was heard from startled and sorrowing friends in Parliament. In the Peers, Lord Eldon groaned aloud and wept bitterly, but the ministerial majority in the Commons cared little for his prophecies of evil. Nor even did the subsequent concession of the Catholic Relief Bill, exceptionally trying as it was to the tenacity of party ties, convince those who planned and carried it that the disappointment or resentment it evoked was likely to be of any permanent significance. No signal opportunity occurred for putting to the proof the traditional amenability of supporters for several years ; and relying on the wide margin of confidence which a majority of three-score and ten seemed to afford, Sir R. Peel made up his own mind, without troubling himself to make up the mind of his party, to abandon the system of colonial and agricultural protection, for sake of whose defence he had been brought into power. He had displaced his rivals for endeavouring to abate high preferential duties on sugar and corn, yet those on the former were now to be lessened materially, and those on the latter might to-morrow be given up. In the long-remembered sarcasm of his hitherto condemned but henceforth formidable censor, "He had caught the Whigs bathing, and had stolen their clothes." It would have been hard to grudge the valetudinarian of Bocket the amusement which this and like sallies of his early acquaintance afforded him ; and when on subsequent occasions the daring leader of Conservative mutiny recalled the scenes in which

Canning had been done to death on suspicion of compassing measures his destroyers soon afterwards actually carried, Melbourne rubbed his hands and laughed his old laugh again ; and foreshortening his recollection of his strange talk with Disraeli at Storey's Gate, exclaimed, " By Jove ! I believe he'll do it after all."¹

Palmerston, who intensely enjoyed the distrust which he saw had fallen upon the credulous and short-sighted Country Party that had rejected the Whig compromise of 1841, amused himself and the public by a leading article, little suspected to be from his pen, beginning with the parody,²

We are all sliding, slid, slid, sliding,
We are all sliding, sliding fast away.

Lord Spencer is known to have received about this time an intimation from the Duke of Bedford that he would do well to hold himself in readiness for a summons from the Queen, in case a change became necessary in administration.³ He certainly believed in the possibility of his being sent for, and began to ruminate over old ties and pledges, the tenacity of which would save him from again being entangled in the perplexities of public affairs. To his brother Frederick he said that of course it would be his duty to attend the summons and submit his advice to the Queen ; but his proposition for a new ministry could not be carried into effect, as he felt that he was bound in honour to offer the Chancellorship to Lord Brougham, if he chose to accept it. It is, however, certain that whatever the Duke may have thought, he had no authority to make the communication in question. Notwithstanding the impression that prevailed elsewhere of a coming change of ministry, it had not made its way at Court, and Lord Spencer's name was never presented to the Queen in the contingent capacity of First Minister.

Throughout his long and chequered life Melbourne had had his sorrows and his troubles. But the greatest of his trials was to come, in the sense of being neglected. Too susceptible not to feel, and too proud to masquerade in gay looks when his soul was sad within him, he chafed daily at the indifference with which he was treated, not merely by the common herd of fashion, but by those who for years had compassed him round with blandishments of what he had taken for respect and attachment. For a time he tried to persuade himself that the numerous omissions to call were partly accidental. Some were sick, and some had gone abroad ; some were time-servers and shabby dogs who had learned to trim, and were ashamed to look in the face their old patron : was he not better without them ? But as weeks and months rolled on, and the bed of the once full stream of attention grew more and more dry, the hope of its ever returning

¹ See vol. i. p. 426.

² *Morning Chronicle*.

³ Le Marchant's 'Life of Spencer,' p. 559, on authority of a memorandum found among the papers of the Hon. Richard Watson.

again shrank within him. In the heyday of success and power he would have laughed loudly and merrily at the notion of the world's being grateful. Still between genuine or abiding gratitude, and silent, stony, pitiless neglect there is a difference, and a wide one. He could not deceive himself in thinking that he was forgotten because the worldly, plausible, ambitious, and intriguing thought him no longer worth remembering, or recurring to for advice or aid. Still there must be many who seemed always to have valued him for his own sake, and whom he valued for theirs with an instinct of kindred strength and mutual assurance; where were they? Had they too forgotten what he was to them? or was he really that no longer? One who truly and unalterably loved him found him in the afternoon looking more than usually dejected. "I am glad," he exclaimed, "you are come. I have sat here watching that timepiece, and heard it strike four times without seeing the face of a human being; and had it struck the fifth I feel that I could not have borne it." Then after a little while the solace of gentle and wise companionship appeared to still the aching consciousness that had almost demented him; his equanimity returned, something like cheerfulness; and for the residue of that day he was content, and bright and calm again.

During his stay at Melbourne, his attention was directed to the singular change which had come over the minds of many of the clergy who a few years before had been loud in upbraiding him for showing respect, in Ireland, for the Catholic as well as the Protestant Church; yet who now disparaged the Reformed faith and sought reconciliation with Rome. He addressed a private letter on the subject to his old ally the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*, who, with every disposition to take any suggestion he might offer, found himself at fault from an unexpected cause. The first few lines of the letter were legible in the well-known hand, but those that followed were difficult to decipher, and of the latter half he could make nothing at all: unconscious infirmity was the too obvious cause; and it would have been therefore impossible to ask for an explanation from the invalid. Sir John Easthope took the letter to Palmerston, who, familiar with the handwriting, with his pencil underlined all the portions that were obscure, word for word. It thus remains a curious if not unique instance of an epistle on public affairs, indited by a Prime Minister that was, and rendered legible in interlineal copy by a Prime Minister that was to be:—

"One of the principal topics which used to be made use of against my Government was that we were enemies of the Church of England, and friends and supporters of the Church of Rome. This topic was used very generally and with great vigour by the clergy throughout the country. Since that time a certain portion of the clergy have gone over openly to the Church of Rome, and have abandoned the Church of England altogether. I wish this conduct could be pointed out and commented upon with some force, as it ought to be, and if any speeches could be discovered made in this sense by any of the clergy who have

since seceded from the Church, the pointing out of their inconsistency might add considerably to the pungency of these observations. I am staying here until the 31st of this month. It is not likely that you will again leave London, but if you and Lady Easthope should roam this way I should be glad to see you here. The railroad would bring you to Derby, from whence we are distant seven or eight miles."¹

During the autumn he seemed to regain his spirits. He took more exercise; received visitors at Brocket, and was once more the delight of the familiar circle assembled at Panshanger.

At a public dinner which with difficulty he had been persuaded to attend, he made a speech which he meant to serve as an indication of his views of public affairs. The aspect of the country was at the moment highly prosperous. The flush of speculation was in its cheek, and the pulse of industry was quickened by enormous expenditure in the construction of railways and other joint-stock undertakings. Although the Corn Laws had not been repealed, peace and plenty reigned, owing confessedly to the further adoption by Sir R. Peel of the principles of free trade. The attempt to govern Ireland by repression had broken down and been abandoned, and measures of conciliation pointing towards religious equality had been substituted in its stead, with a visible abatement of threatening agitation. He might well exult in the adoption by his supplanter of the policy for which he had been driven from power. In the memorable words of Mr. Disraeli, "Protection was now in the same perilous position a Protestant ascendancy had been fifteen years before."

His agricultural hearers cheered his good-humoured taunts; and he was sufficiently pleased with himself to look with curiosity for the report in the morning papers. There was a time when he cared for none of these things; but the misgiving had begun to haunt him that the world no longer cared as much as it used to do for what he said or thought. But four short years ago he was First Minister of England; treated with unbounded confidence by his sovereign; his name a toast at festive gatherings, and a rallying cry at election meetings; by allies and by adversaries the observed of all observers; and if not solaced by domestic joy, consoled by "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." It was natural perhaps that he should be less and less an object of attention, political and personal, when out of office and when out of health; and, never having had the art of contriving or the knack of seizing opportunities for display, it was not perhaps strange that by paragraph-writers he should seem to be forgotten. It was not a pleasant sensation, not one he would confess. But every now and then it came, and went, and came again. He had been ill, they said; but he was not ill now; he had grown careful and would not be ill. People should hear of him once more. Bitter was his vexation at finding a careless summary in the daily papers of what he had said, some points blunted and the rest left out. He happened to be in town, two or three days afterwards. An intimate friend who had noticed his annoyance

¹ To Sir John Easthope, October 13th, 1845.

mentioned it casually to the editor of a leading journal, who offered to repair the error by publishing a correct report if he could obtain it. He received some pages the next morning from the ex-Premier; but in a hand hardly recognisable, and which he was unable to decipher. In his perplexity he took the manuscript to Palmerston, who owned himself at fault in many passages. He asked the never-failing aid of her to whom a brother's reputation was most dear. She looked at the writing for a moment and burst into tears. "Could you," exclaimed Palmerston, "take it down in shorthand if he could be got to repeat it?" "Certainly," was the reply. "Then let us try." They drove to South Street, and found Melbourne going to dinner alone. He insisted that his visitors should stay and dine; and after much talk in his old abrupt and fitful way, he consented to repeat the contents of the illegible scrawl, expressing himself obliged and gratified. On every subject that he touched during the interview his mind seemed to be as clear and active as it had ever been; and as though utterly unconscious of the two visible marks of physical infirmity, he spoke more than once like a man who did not think he had done with public life. He could surmise as little as the rest of the world how near was the ministerial change then actually impending, but his editorial guest as he left him, felt with pain that he dreamed of being a minister again.

The failure of the harvest, and especially of the potato crop in Ireland, compelled the Cabinet in November to consider the necessity of opening the ports by Order in Council; but Sir R. Peel failed to obtain a concurrence in his view that, once adopted freedom of trade in food should be made permanent by law. Prices continued to rise; apprehensions of famine increased; and Ministers separated without any announcement of what was to be done. Lord Ashley told his constituents in Dorsetshire that the Corn Laws were doomed; Lord Morpeth sent in his adhesion to the League; and Lord J. Russell wrote from Edinburgh publicly renouncing his advocacy of a fixed duty, and declaring his conviction that the time had come for entire abolition of a system which had proved to be "the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture and the cause of want and crime." The Cabinet reassembled. Lords Wharncliffe and Stanley were still obdurate; on the 4th of December the *Times* announced that the abolition of the Corn Laws had been resolved on by the Premier, and on the 7th he resigned. With the promise of his support on the question, Lord John undertook to form an administration; and after conference with his former colleagues he believed he had succeeded, when Lord Grey refused to serve with Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. Sir R. Peel was consequently recalled. The vacancies caused by the sudden death of Lord Wharncliffe, and the withdrawal of Lord Stanley, were filled by the nomination of the Duke of Buccleuch as President of the Council, and Mr. Gladstone as Colonial Secretary of State: and the forecast of Lord Aberdeen, on which the *Times* relied, was redeemed in the ensuing session. Sir Robert Peel renounced his pledges to maintain a fluctuating duty on foreign corn,

and avowed himself a convert to unconditional Free Trade. When a Government Bill framed in accordance with the principles of the Anti-Corn Law League had passed the Commons, the ex-President of the Council called a meeting of the Whig Peers at Lansdowne House, to confer on the course to be adopted by them. Some were for abiding by the offer of 1841 of a Fixed Duty, others for adhering to the old faith in a sliding scale, notwithstanding its abandonment by ministers. Melbourne, though an invalid, had come from Bocket to take part in the consultation, and at its close said that, whatever might be thought of the change of front by their Party opponents, their duty was to acquiesce in the measure now inevitable. The Whigs had to wait a few months longer before they returned to office; but for him who had been so long their chief there was thenceforth no more room for cherishing illusions. Melbourne was not invited to take part in any of the conferences in December, ostensibly on the ground of temporary illness, but in reality because it was felt that he was permanently too debilitated to be asked to undertake high office in the critical condition of affairs. He was not at first of that opinion, and thought he should have been offered the Privy Seal. To more than one of his old associates in power his omission was a source of unaffected sorrow; the more so inasmuch as they could not be unconscious of the effect that it was sure to have upon his failing health and spirits.

In an unpublished sketch by Charles Greville, he is described as quoting with obvious application to himself, the well-known lines from Milton's 'Agonistes'—

So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself.
My race of glory run, *not* race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with those that rest.

In public controversy he took no further part; but his vote on all occasions of importance continued to be given with those of his old friends. He was gratified by the appointment of Lord Besborough to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, and by Palmerston's reinstatement as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Lord John, enclosing a list of the new Cabinet, said he had not proposed to him to form a part of it, because he did not think his health was equal to the fatigues which any office must entail. For though there were offices with little business in themselves, the Parliamentary work had increased so greatly that a Lord Privy Seal, for instance, must take charge of committees and be constantly engaged in assisting the Leader of the House of Lords. He had proposed to put William Cowper into his old place in the Treasury.¹ The invalid replied—"you have judged very rightly and kindly in making me no offer. I am subject to such frequent accesses of illness as render me incapable of any exertion. I am glad of what you intend about William Cowper. I do not think that he would

mind being left out himself, but it would have been very unpalatable to his mother.”¹ He was ready when asked, as he was not unfrequently by its chief, to afford the benefit of his experience and advice. And so the sun went down slowly and cloudily, and few seemed to notice when it actually disappeared.

Reading still constituted the chief consolation of his solitude, and men of letters, to many of whom his reputation as a scholar was well known, sought to engage his attention and sympathy. Leigh Hunt sent him a copy of his stories from the *Italian Poets* which he asked him to present to the Queen. The following was his reply :—

“Brockett Hall, October 14th, 1846.

“SIR,—Looking at your last letters and your last publication this morning puts me in mind that I have to beg your pardon for not having noticed many of your former communications. If you will send me another copy of your extracts from the *Italian Poets*, I will take an opportunity of presenting it to Her Majesty. With respect to your work upon wit and humour I have some doubts, I confess, because, though there is nothing in it to which the most absurd fastidiousness can make any real objection, there are necessarily, from the nature of the subject, some passages in it the laying of which immediately under Her Majesty’s eyes might be liable to misrepresentation. You will not wonder that I am rather unnerved when you recollect that your brothers of the press have severely censured me for recommending Dr. Arnold’s sermons for Her Majesty’s perusal, and you know also that I was much attacked by the *Times*, because it appeared upon the trial with Norton that I had advised Mrs. Norton to read Dr. Lardner’s observations upon the Jewish errors with respect to the conversion of Mary Magdalen.

“With respect to the latter part of your note it is my opinion that a pension would be well bestowed if conferred upon you, but you will not be surprised when I add that I have determined not to interfere in any matters of this nature.

“Believe me,

“Yours faithfully,

“MELBOURNE.”

He retained his old liking for Campbell, and dined with him in the spring of 1847, with a numerous party which included Lord Russell, Lord Derby, and his old antagonists Brougham and Lyndhurst. In social intercourse he seemed to take undimmed delight. One morning about the middle of October, Mr. Lattimore called and found Lord Melbourne engaged in writing. “Take the newspaper until I have finished my despatch.” It took some time, and when completed he told him what it was about :—

“Lord Lansdowne and Lord John have written to ask my opinion about giving power to the Bank to extend its issues beyond the limits prescribed by the Act. Consols are down to 81 $\frac{3}{4}$, and general panic

¹ Lady Palmerston.

prevails in the City. They want to know my opinion if it would be safe. What do you say?"

The friend of Cobden without hesitation replied, "Perfectly safe : it must be done." He seemed pleased, and said that was his own opinion ; and that he had told them so. Two days after the letter of the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer authorising the Directors to disregard the Act of 1844 appeared in the *Times*, and the impending ruin was averted. Melbourne said he thought assistance might have been given sooner to some of the great houses that were known to be in jeopardy, and who might thus have been saved. But he admitted all the difficulties of such a method of proceeding, and cast no blame upon his old colleagues for the course they had pursued.

In November the Duke of Bedford, Mr. W. Cowper and Lord Beauvale stayed some days at Broom's Barn. Lord Jocelyn, who had held office in the preceding Government, and had remained attached to its chief after its fall, was also of the party ; and on seeing Mr. Lattimore, who had called to inquire for the invalid, took him aside and said he had a message for him from Sir Robert Peel, with instructions not to deliver it in Lord Melbourne's presence. Next day he rode over to Wheathampstead. The Duke said he would have accompanied him, but that he was unwilling to leave his friend, whom he thought fast declining, and feared he might never have an opportunity of visiting again. Sir Robert's message was to express a desire to renew his correspondence with Mr. Lattimore upon agricultural subjects, having received much valuable information in former communications, and intimating his regret that he had not made his personal acquaintance at an earlier period.

During the short winter session Lord Cottenham fell ill ; and there being no prospect of his recovering sufficiently to resume his public duties, the question arose who should be Chancellor. To tantalising inquiries whether he still had hopes, Brougham said were he now to take the Great Seal his first act would be to issue a commission of lunacy against himself. What good would the possession of that trinket do him now ? He had no child left whom increase of rank and state could gratify or serve ; and at the thought his tears flowed freely. Softened by affectionate memories, he declared that he had not meant to quarrel with the Whigs, and that "had Melbourne only treated him with more consideration, they never need have quarrelled." For all this it was not in the nature of the man to rest quiet when he knew that the Woolsack was about to be vacated, and that half his political acquaintances were busy with speculation as to how it should be filled. Many of the Government wished for the elevation of Baron Rolfe ; others for the promotion of Sir T. Wilde ; and Campbell was in favour of himself. The Premier went to consult Melbourne, who told him Brougham called on him likewise to talk it over, and was told that "he must lay his account with seeing Jack Campbell Chancellor ;" at which he waxed furious, said that it would

disgust the Equity bar, and for himself, he would never sit in the House of Lords with such a Chancellor. All this was narrated soon afterwards at Brooks's to Campbell by Edward Ellice, who professed himself to be one of his supporters in the struggle. Lord Cottenham rallied, and the contention was adjourned for a few months more.

Melbourne's last vote¹ in Parliament was given, as his first had been, in favour of religious liberty. Unable to endure the fatigue of a long debate on the Bill for the removal of Jewish Disabilities he left his proxy in its favour with Lord Lansdowne; thus fitly ending a legislative life of more than forty years, by recording his unwavering conviction that for conscience sake no man should be suspected of unpatriotism by the law. Attendance in the House of Lords had grown irksome to him, and during the remainder of the session he but seldom appeared in his place. The state of affairs abroad and at home was not calculated to revive his waning interest in the contention of party; yet he still loved to hear what was going on from Palmerston and Spring Rice, Hq-house and Ellice, when they called; and he would not unfrequently spend an hour or two at the house of the Misses Berry, where many of his old friends best worth meeting were certain to drop in.

Before the close of the session, the proceedings of the Young Ireland party led to a temporary suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. After a vain attempt at insurrection, Mr. Smith O'Brien and his ill-advised associates were arrested, and a few weeks later brought to trial upon a charge of treason. To the surprise and vexation of Melbourne, he learned from the newspapers that his name was inconsiderately and unwarrantably introduced at the trial as having sanctioned in 1832 a supposed attempt to debauch certain officers of the army with a view by menaces of force to secure the passing of the Reform Bill. Sir William Napier, who in 1832 held a command in the central counties, was called as a witness for the defence to prove that a communication had been addressed to him with regard to placing himself at the head of an insurgent array, organised by the Birmingham League, and who were supposed to be in readiness to march on London for the purpose of overawing the House of Lords. The letter, he said, was dated from H. O., 25th June, 1832; was signed with the initials T. Y.; was closed with the official seal, and was franked by Melbourne. Chief Justice Blackburn over-ruled the question as to the contents or purport on the ground that it was not evidence. Never having been published, it could not be treated as history; and having been written sixteen years before by a person having no connection with the parties accused, to an individual who was a stranger to their acts and motives, it was plainly irrelevant to the pending issue. But a copy having been furnished to counsel it appeared *in extenso* next day in the *Freeman's Journal*, and naturally attracted no ordinary degree of attention.

¹ May 25th, 1848.

"H. O., June 25, '32.

"MY DEAR NAPIER,—Sir H. Bunbury told me of your wise determination not to become 'a parliament man,' at least for the present. The offer was very tempting, and you have the more merit in declining. I refrained from writing to you while the matter was undecided, for I did not wish to obtrude my opinion, but I felt that reason was against your acceptance, as your health, your purse, and your comfort would all have suffered by your attendance in the House of Commons. The History¹ must have been laid aside. You could not, moreover, have been a calm and silent member, but would have been exerting yourself to push onward the movement faster than it probably will march, or than, perhaps, all things considered, it is desirable that it should march. Let us go back a moment. The display of energy, and a readiness to act on the part of the people when the Duke of W—— was on the eve of coming in, was greater far than I expected. I speak not of the Cockneys, but of the men in the North—Glasgow, Newcastle, Birmingham. Are you aware that, in the event of a fight, you were to be invited to take the command at Birmingham? Parkes got a frank from me for you with that view, but had no occasion to send it. Had he written, I should have fired a despatch at you with my friendly and anxious counsel, and entreaty to keep you quiet and not to stir from Freshford. It is not well to enter early into revolutions—the first fall victims. What do you think would have happened? The Reformers (Place, etc.) talked big to me, and felt assured of success. The run upon the Banks and the barricading of the populous country towns would have brought matters to a crisis, and a week they—the Reformers—thought would have finished the business. They meant so to agitate here that no soldiers could have been spared from London, and the army is too small elsewhere to have put down the rebels. In Scotland, I believe, the most effectual blow would have been struck, and it seemed difficult to have resisted the popular movement. The Tories, however, say the Duke would have won. No doubt the discipline under which soldiers live might have proved a stronger element than the public enthusiasm, *i.e.* unless the latter was universal or extensive, and then it would have carried all before it. The task would have been to bring back society to its former quiet state! Thank God we have been spared the trial; but, as a matter of speculation, tell me what you think would have been the result? Am I right in my conjecture that you would have refused the Birmingham invite, and kept your sword in its scabbard?—Yours ever truly, T. Y."

The topic was a godsend to the comic writers; Thackeray could not repress his laughter, knowing as he did the man and his fussy absurdity. He broke forth in *Punch*:—"Young's Night Thoughts—I wish I had never franked that letter." Parkes took the wit aside, at the Reform Club, and endeavoured to explain to him the serious harm

¹ The History of the Peninsular War.

it would do the party if public attention were kept alive on the subject. Thackeray, to hide his sense of amusement, looked over his head at an angle of forty-five degrees, as was his wont in such emergencies, and suffered the remonstrant to reiterate with cumulative emphasis, "You ought not, really you ought not, I say you ought not to compromise a man like Melbourne, with the Court, in this way." The mountain heaved from side to side with suppressed mirth, ending in an explosion of laughter, overwhelming all the small fences and palings of party propriety. Young was summoned to Bocket to give an account of himself. Justification being impossible, he tried to extenuate his inconceivable folly by recounting how everybody he had met in town blamed Napier for the disclosure, and laughed at the idea of any one supposing that the Home Secretary of 1832 would have harboured the idea of tampering with the loyalty of any man. The valetudinarian listened moodily to the voluble tissue of unavailing excuses. He was vexed with himself for having committed the mistake of ever trusting such a man with the privilege of using his official seal and franking letters in his name. He was not, however, seriously troubled with the notion that any one who had the least knowledge of his character and conduct would give heed to the reckless attempt to impute to him any cognisance "of the written chatter of that blockhead." The public press, without distinction of party, treated the matter generally with ridicule.

Early in November his old malady showed symptoms of returning; and the consciousness that it lay in ambush for him prostrated his remaining power to ward off attack. At last it came, and though life was for a few days prolonged, his mental activity awoke no more. The public were first apprised of his condition by the following announcement:—

"It is feared that Lord Melbourne is dying. At one time the family at Bocket did not expect, on Thursday, that he would live through the day. On Friday he rallied; on Saturday morning he still continued rather better. Since then the noble Lord has remained in much the same state. In answer to inquiries this day at noon, we hear that up to the latest accounts received from Bocket no material change has occurred in his condition."¹

For two days more he lingered, gradually losing consciousness, and apparently the sense of pain; medical aid and tender care were unavailing. At length his hour was come, and after threescore years and ten he passed away with no other utterance than a long-drawn sigh.²

Among those who followed his remains to their last resting-place were Lords Cowper, Palmerston, De Mauley, Ebrington, and Ashley, Hon. W. and S. Cowper, Hon. C. Howard and Sir Thomas Birch.

¹ *Morning Chronicle*, November 22nd, 1848.

² November 24th, 1848.

127

INDEX.

- Abbot, Speaker, Opinion of Howick, 43.
- Abercromby, elected Speaker, 347 ; re-elected, 442 ; resigns, 476.
- "Ada Reis," novel by Lady Caroline Lamb, 84.
- Afghanistan, Designs on, 465.
- Albert, Prince, invited to Windsor, 492 ; visits Melbourne at Bocket, 522.
- Alexander, Chief Baron, 149.
- Alien Act, 120.
- Allen, Librarian at Holland House, 65.
- Althorp, Junior Lord of the Treasury under Grenville, 40 ; character and pursuits, 50, 51 ; moves for a committee to inquire into the pay of public officers, 77 ; for inquiry into the discontented state of the country in 1818, 92 ; Chairman of the Finance Committee in 1827, 143 ; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 221 ; letter to his father on O'Connell's arrest, 231 ; on Stanley's Arms Bill, 239 ; on Reform Bill, 247 ; on resignation of Durham, 255 ; supports Brougham and Durham in urging a sufficient creation of peers, 259 ; on the Coercion Bill, 269 ; resigns, 287 ; his qualifications for the Premiership, 294-5 ; becomes a peer, 305.
- Alvanley, Repeal and Melbourne's reply, 365.
- Anglesey, Viceroy, 199 ; visits Lord Cloncurry to meet O'Connell, 206 ; recalled, 207 ; re-appointed Viceroy, 229 ; retains old law officers, 229 ; proclamation against meeting of trades, 230 ; on Irish Church, 252 ; presses for Irish Tithe Bill, 263 ; distrust of Stanley, 263 ; letter to Cloncurry, 263, 264 ; to Secretary Stanley, 264 ; resignation, 276.
- Anson, George, appointed Private Secretary to Prince Albert, 492.
- Ashburton, Lord, suggestion of cheap postage, 391.
- Atwood, Henry, 248.
- Auckland, First Lord of Admiralty, 369 ; Governor-General of India in 1835, 370.
- Aylmer, interview with William IV., 431.
- Baines, Edward, 510.
- Bank Act, Suspension of, 1847, 546.
- Bannerman, 477.
- Baring, A., 262.
- Barlow, Professor, 475. [284.
- Barnes, Mr., editor of *Times* in 1834,
- Baxter, Richard, 4.
- Beauvale, 532.
- Bedford, Francis, 5th Duke of, 16.
- Bedford, John, 6th Duke, Viceroy of Ireland in 1806, 39 ; confidential correspondence concerning the Catholic Officers Bill, 45.
- Bedford, Francis, 7th Duke, on the possible resignation of Sir Robert Peel, 540.
- Belfast Institution, Lamb's letters on the, 181.
- Bentinck, Lord W., proposal to Spring Rice to accompany him to India, 197 ; address to the electors of Glasgow, 401.
- Bernal, Mr., 338.
- Berry, Miss, notes from her diary on the birth of William Lamb's son, 49 ; quotations from the same, 49, 60.
- Besborough, 33.
- Bicheno, Mr., 299.
- Bickersteth, Master of the Rolls, 396.
- Birmingham, Political Union in, 215, 248.
- Black Sea, Proposals concerning the, 507.
- Blackburn, Francis, 269 ; Attorney-General in Ireland, 302.
- Blomfield, Bishop, 260, 429.
- Brand, Henry, on the formation of Mr. Perceval's Cabinet, 47.
- Brandon, Lady, 211.
- Bristol riots, 249.
- Brocket Hall, purchased by Sir M. Lamb, 1746, 8.

- Brooks's Club, Lamb a member of, 37.
- Brougham, Henry, letters to Earl Grey on the exclusion of Romilly, Tierney, and Lamb from Parliament in 1812, 63; Attorney-General to Queen Caroline, 99; supports Canning's Administration, 142; to Spring Rice regarding Lansdowne, 153; "The Great Seal or Nothing," 221; on the nomination of Melbourne to the Premiership, 294; conduct in session of 1834, 297; letter to Spencer on dismissal of the Whigs, 314; excluded from office, 357; jealousy of Pepsys, 398; altercation with Melbourne, 446; exasperation on being excluded from the Cabinet in 1837, 448; attack on Ministers in 1839 unsupported, 484; impugns the policy pursued on the Eastern Question, 515; speech on Address in 1842, 529.
- Brummel, George ("Beau Brummel"), 29, 30.
- Bülow, Count, 319.
- Bulwer, Sir E. Lytton, article in the *Edinburgh* in 1839, 491.
- Bulwer, Henry, candidate for Hertford, 138.
- Burdett, Sir F., on the Regency, 54; address to Westminster on Reform, 95; moves for leave to bring in the Catholic Relief Bill, 140; speech on the coalition of the Whigs in 1827, 142; defeats Mr. Leader for Westminster, 434.
- Byron, maiden speech in the Peers, 67; acquaintance with Lady Caroline, 68; friendship of Lady Melbourne, 70; marriage with Miss Milbanke, 72; correspondence with Lady Caroline, 72-3; separation from his wife, 74; death and funeral, 123.
- Cabinet, Changes in the, in 1839, 488.
- Cabinet Minute, March 15 and 18, 1807, 45.
- Calvert, Mr., 134.
- Camden, William, 2.
- Campbell, Sir J., 384, 396; appointed Irish Chancellor, 521.
- Canning, compliments on W. Lamb's maiden speech, 44; speech on the Regency, 57; his colleagues, 60; is appointed President of the Board of Control, 79; answer to William Lamb's speech on retrenchment, 82; speech against Parliamentary Reform during the session of 1819, 94; on Queen Caroline, 98; resigns the Board of Control, 98; speech on the Roman Catholic Peers Bill in 1821, 107; appointed Governor-General of India, 107; Secretary of State and leader of the House of Commons, 109; the independence of South American States, 113; administration in 1827, 140; answer to Copley's speech on Catholic Relief Bill, 141; explains his views on Ireland to William Lamb, 146; and Plunket, 149; his death, 150.
- Carlisle to have the Garter, 425.
- Carlton House, 17.
- Caroline, Queen, Proceedings against, 94, 98, 103-105.
- Castlereagh defends Canning, 44; appointed Foreign Secretary, 61; dies by his own hand, 108.
- Cato Street Conspiracy, 94.
- Cavendish, Lord George, moves address to Regent on retrenchment of civil expenditure, 76; member of Secret Committee, 83.
- Chadwick, Mr., 284.
- Chantrey's bust of Melbourne, 455.
- Church patronage, Abuse of, 33.
- Cipriani Giovanni, 12.
- Civil List, Details relating to the, 445.
- Clarendon Privy Seal, 494.
- Clark, Sir George, 477.
- Clermont, 14; appointment in the Prince of Wales's household, 18.
- Clifford, Captain, afterwards Sir Augustus, 97.
- Cloncurry, 206.
- Cobbett, answer to George Lamb's speech on Parliamentary Reform, 95.
- Cobden, Richard, and the Corn Laws, 534-5.
- Cochrane presents petition from Saddleworth on neglect of popular suffering, 82.

- Conyngham bears tidings of Victoria's accession, 437.
- Copleston, Bishop, 106; advice to Mr. Ward, 110; appointed to the see of Llandaff, 151.
- Copley, Master of the Rolls; on the Catholic Relief Bill, 140-1; defence of the Dissenters' Marriage Bill, 146.
- Cosway, Maria, painting of Lady Melbourne, 18; of her son George, 20.
- Cottenham, 401, 459, 519, 521, 546.
- Cowper, 37, 549.
- Cowper, Hon. S., 549.
- Cowper, Hon. W., 549.
- Cowper, Lady, 276.
- Criminal Law Reform, 53.
- Croker, Mr., on the new postal law, 491.
- Crown jewels, 459.
- Cumberland, Duke of, 209; on Mr. Norton's action against Lord Melbourne, 411; takes up his residence in Hanover, 459.
- Curran, John Philpot, Master of the Rolls in 1806, 40.
- Curran, William (son of the orator), 206, 376.
- Damer, Mrs., daughter of General Conway, 11, 20; her talent for modelling, 20; her marriage with the son of Dorchester, 20; models, representation in marble of Peniston Lamb, 20; friendship with Lady Melbourne, 21; her dramatic talent, 21.
- Denison, Mr. Evelyn, conversation with Melbourne on the Factory Bill, 272.
- Denman, Mr. (afterwards Lord Denman), appointed by Queen Caroline her Solicitor-general, 99; letter to Spring Rice on the Speakership, 341.
- Disraeli, Benjamin, forecasts his Premiership, 274.
- Dissenters' Marriage Bill, 146.
- Doherty, Mr., Chief Justice Common Pleas, 230.
- Doyle, Bishop, 128, 185; correspondence with Melbourne concerning Sub-letting Act, 233; on abolition of tithes, 253; on rejection of Reform, 253.
- Drummond, Henry, and the revelation of the unknown tongues, 399.
- Drummond, Thomas, Under-Secretary for Ireland, 368; evidence before Lords' committee on Dublin constabulary, 393; counsel concerning government of Ireland, 472; scheme for formation of railways in Ireland, 474; his death, 497.
- Duncannon, 40, 125; re-elected for Kilkenny, 232; on committee to prepare Reform Bill, 235; appointed Home Secretary, 296; on the Irish Poor Inquiry, 299.
- Duncombe, Mr. T. S., 134; election for Hertford, 139.
- Dunning, John (Lord Ashburton), carries resolution concerning influence of Crown, 14.
- Durham, 235; Ambassador to Russia, 360; Governor of Canada, 460-1; announces his resignation, 461.
- East India Company's charter, renewal of the, 270.
- Ebrington, Viceroy of Ireland, 472; attends Melbourne's funeral, 549.
- Education, first grant for, 486.
- Egremont, Lord, 14, 21, 22; receives the King of Prussia, etc., at Petworth, 71; his death, 445.
- Eldon, Chief Justice, 61.
- Ellenborough on proceedings against Queen Caroline, 99.
- Ellice, Edward, 213, 267; interview with O'Connell, 364.
- Elliott, Mr., Irish Secretary in 1806, 39, 83.
- Elliott on the Catholic Relief Bill, 140.
- Factory Act, 231.
- "Fashionable Friends," a comedy ascribed to William Lamb, 29.
- Fingall on the Catholic Officers Bill, 45; and the Catholic Association, 128.
- Finlayson, engraving of Sir J. Reynolds's painting of Lady Melbourne and her son, 13.

- FitzClarence, allowance granted to family of, 447.
 FitzClarence, Lord Frederick, 380.
 Fitzgerald, Vesey (Lord Fitzgerald), 205; illness, 212; on the Tithe Bill, 451-2.
 Fonblanque, Albany, 274.
 Fortescue on Plunket, 171.
 Fox, Lady Mary, 410.
 Foye, Rev. Martin, 511.
 France, violence excited in, by Quadruple Treaty, 506.
 Freemantle, Sir W., letter to Buckingham on appointment of Marquis of Anglesey to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, 199.
- Garlies, 9.
 Gascoigne, General, 238.
 George IV., proceedings with regard to Queen Caroline, 94, 98-105; and the Whigs, 106; death, 215.
 Glasgow, reputation of, as a seat of learning, 24.
 "Glenarvon," novel by Lady C. Lamb, 74.
 Glenelg, 380.
 Goderich Cabinet, the, 151, 154, 189.
 Goderich, 151, 174; resignation of office, 193; on Portuguese Question, 214; weakness as a minister, 189.
 Godwin, William, 89, 111.
 Gormaston, 45, 128.
 Gosford, Governor of Canada in 1835, 379.
 Gossett, Sir William, Serjeant at Arms, 367.
 Goulburn, Mr., 485.
 Government advertisements, reformation in system of, 161.
 Gower, Lord Francis L., bill concerning Catholic clergy, 132-3; Secretary for Ireland, 203.
 Grafton, gets a Garter, 303.
 Graham, Sir James, 235, 267, 338, 498.
 Grant, Charles, 152; Colonial Secretary in 1835, 354.
 Grattan, Relief Act, 41; urges reform in Irish tithe system, 42; death, 97.
 Grenville, is called upon to form an administration, after the death of Mr. Pitt, 38; resigns, 46; on Catholic Emancipation, 211.
 Greville, Charles, on Melbourne's failure on the Portuguese Question, 214; on the creation of peers, 257-8; conversation with Melbourne on the Irish Question, etc., 265; on Melbourne's opinions, 267; passages from his journal relating to the party feelings at the commencement of the Melbourne Government, 363; opinion of Bentinck, 401.
 Grey Administration, 221.
 Grey, Mr. (afterwards Earl), marriage, 37; sides with Melbourne with respect to the removal of Hill from the command of the Army, 267; answer to Lyndhurst's speech against the Reform Bill of 1831, 246; letters to Althorp on the creation of peers, 256, 260; offers the post of Irish Viceroy to Melbourne, 276-7; resigns office, 287; refuses to resume office as Premier, 352.
- Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, third reading, 84.
 Hamilton, Duke of, receives the Order of the Garter, 394.
 Hamilton, Lord Archibald, his motion for the restoration of Queen Caroline's name in the Liturgy, 104.
 Hampden, Dr., appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, 403.
 Harrowby, 94, 254, 257.
 Hart, Sir Anthony, his appointment as Chancellor of Ireland, 175; conduct, 178; meeting with O'Connell, 206.
 Harvest of 1816, distress occasioned by, 79.
 Hatfield, attempt of, to assassinate the King, 27.
 Haydon, extract from his Memoirs on Melbourne, 268.
 Herat, siege of, 463.
 Herries, Mr., Chancellor of the Exchequer, 153.
 Heytesbury, nomination as Governor-General of India cancelled, 370;

- subsequent conduct as Irish Viceroy, 371.
- Hill, Rowland, and postal reform, 485.
- Hobhouse, John Cam, 88; pamphlets against Canning and Erskine, 94; sent to Newgate, 95; letter on the Westminster election, 95; returned for Westminster, 97; on the Alien Act, 120; Commissioner of Woods and Forests, 304-5; President of the Board of Control, 355; extracts from 'Recollections' with respect to the administration of 1836, 397.
- Holland, 11; opinions concerning the Catholic disabilities, 46; speech on Greek affairs, 214; letter to Cloncurry, informing him that Melbourne was authorised to form a Ministry, 359; death, 514.
- Howick, leader of the Commons in 1806, 43; denounces Canning's amendment and speech at the opening of Parliament, 43.
- Howick, Lord (present Earl Grey), Secretary at War in 1835, 355.
- Howley, Dr., 94, 266, 390; his opinion of Thirlwall's edition of Schleiermacher, 501.
- Hudson, Mr., his journey in search of Sir R. Peel, 316.
- Hume, David, anecdote of, 20.
- Hume, Joseph, on Irish Church Question, 119, chairman of the committee on Orange Lodges; moves an address to the Crown concerning the same, 401.
- Huskisson, William, secretary to Gower, 40; named by Dundas to superintend the working of the Alien Act, 40; appointed Under-Secretary for the Colonies, 40; his marriage with the daughter of Admiral Milbanke, 40; his appearance, disposition and talents, 40; on liberation of trade, 113; goes abroad, 150; his grief at Canning's death, 150; becomes leader of the House of Commons, 151; the "indispensable man," 154; his dispute with Tierney concerning the chairmanship of the Finance Committee, 188; remains in the Ministry under the Duke of Wellington, 198; on the repeal of the Test Act, 200; retires from the Administration, 202; his death, 217.
- Ibrahim Pasha, is expelled from Syria, 499, 506.
- Irish Church, Melbourne's speech on the, 372.
- Irish Church Establishment, 425.
- Irish Corporation Bill, second reading of the, in 1836, 400.
- Irish Poor Bill, 443.
- Irish Question, 127.
- Irish Registration Bill, 498.
- Irish Relief Bill, Plunket on the, 106.
- Irish Tithes Bill, 451.
- Keogh, Mr. Justice, his letter to Sir Coleman O'Loughlen, describing Mr. Ellice's interview with O'Connell, 364.
- Knatchbull, Sir Edward, on Catholic Emancipation, 214.
- Ladies of the Bedchamber, 481.
- Lamb, George, becomes a candidate for Westminster, 89; his speech in support of Burdett's motion for Parliamentary Reform in 1819, 95; is returned for Dungarvan, 97.
- Lamb, Lady Caroline (Lady C. Ponsonby), her pursuits and character, 66; infatuation for Lord Byron, 68; family jars, 73; "Glenarvon," 74; publishes her third novel, "Ada Reis," 84; Letter to Lady Morgan, 85; account of recovery from nervous fever, 86; letter to Godwin, soliciting his interest for George Lamb as candidate for Westminster, 89; her literary friends, 111; letters to Godwin, 111-115; her solicitude about her son, 114; her eccentricities, 124; lines to her husband after their separation, 124-5; her illness, 191; letter (during her illness) to her husband, 192; her death, 196.
- Lamb, Sir Peniston (father to the subject of this Memoir), 6; birth, 8; early life, 9; enters Parliament; his appearance and position, 9;

- marriage with Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke ; is created Lord Melbourne of Kilmore, 10.
- Lamb, Peniston (brother of the subject of this Memoir), his character and appearance, 15 ; early years, 19 ; portrait by Reynolds, 19 ; is returned for Newport in 1790, 23 ; is returned for Hertfordshire, 36 ; his death, 36.
- Lamb, William (subject of this Memoir, 2nd Viscount Melbourne), his birth, 15 ; disposition, 15 ; childhood, 19 ; entered at Eton, his companions, 22 ; is sent to Cambridge, 23 ; entered a student of law at Lincoln's Inn, wins the declamation prize at Trinity, 24 ; essay on "The Progressive Improvements of Mankind," 24 ; studies at Glasgow, 25 ; letter on Bonaparte's offer, 26 ; attends the Prince of Wales to Drury Lane Theatre on the night of the attempted assassination of the King, 27 ; his love of classic verse, 31 ; chambers in the Temple ; acquaintance with Pepys, 32 ; at Devonshire House and Roehampton, 33 ; his intimacy with Lady Caroline Ponsonby, 35 ; joins the Bar at the Lancashire Sessions, 35 ; enters Parliament, 37 ; marriage with Lady Caroline, 37 ; cotemporaries in Parliament, 40 ; member for Leominster, 42 ; his policy towards Ireland, 42 ; lines on Fox, 43 ; maiden speech in 1806, 44 ; speech on ministerial pledges in 1807, 47-48 ; birth of his son, 48 ; Irish affairs, 49 ; acts with Althorp, 50 ; supports Mr. Fuller's motion in 1810 to abolish sinecure places, 53 ; charges Mr. Perceval with misrepresentation, 53 ; meeting with Palmerston, at the house of Mr. Conyers, 53 ; speech on the Regency, 54-7 ; opinion concerning the accusation of the Duke of York, 58 ; supports the Government in the increasing votes for Army and Navy, 59 ; his foreign policy, 59 ; retires from Parliament in 1812, 61 ; his ineffective speaking, 62 ; reading, 65-66 ; contributions to the *Literary Gazette*, 75 ; speeches on retrenchment, 77 ; returned for Peterborough, 77 ; on language of petitions, 82 ; becomes a member of the Secret Committee ; his colleagues, 83 ; on Lord Milton's amendment concerning war salaries, 83 ; on the third reading of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 84 ; his eulogy on Mr. Ponsonby, 84 ; domestic troubles, 86 ; his energy in canvassing for his brother's election at Westminster, 89 ; admiration for Sheridan, 90 ; attempts to write his biography, 90-91 ; the Manchester massacre, 92 ; returned for Hertfordshire, 96 ; opinion concerning the proceedings against Queen Caroline, 98, 104 ; advice to Hon. J. W. Ward, 110 ; Huskisson's policy, 118 ; on repeal of prohibitions, 119 ; a Canningite, 119 ; speech against Hobhouse's motion on the Alien Act, 119 ; refers to the offer of office in the Liverpool Administration, 121 ; his pecuniary difficulties, 122 ; separation from his wife, 123 ; answer to Brougham, with respect to Catholic Association, 129 ; to Mackintosh on the Suppression Bill, 130 ; letters on the Hertfordshire election, 135 ; sides with the Coalitionists in 1827, 142 ; member for Newport, 145 ; Chief Secretary for Ireland, 145 ; returned for Bletchingley, 145 ; takes his son to Ireland, 147 ; his conduct as Irish Secretary, 147 ; confidential letters to Spring Rice concerning treatment of Plunket, 149-150 ; difficulties of Irish Government, 155 ; letter to Lansdowne concerning the public works, commutation of tithe, etc., in Ireland, 156-160 ; makes acquaintance with some of the leaders on agitation, 162 ; visits the Dublin prisons, 163 ; correspondence with Spring Rice on Government jobbing, 164 ; on Post Office espionage, 165 ; presented with the freedom of the Guild of

- St. George, 167; letter concerning the official jealousy of Wellesley, 168; receives letter from Holland concerning Alexander's appointment to the Chancellorship of Ireland, 172; on the proposed appointment of Mr. Justice Burton to the Chancellorship of Ireland, 174; letters to Spring Rice on the appointment of Hart, 174; on the appointment of magistrates, 177; on education in Ireland, 180; to Spring Rice concerning the Belfast Institution, 181; on the parliamentary grants to the Kildare Place Society, etc., 182; letter to Spring Rice with respect to the Foundling Hospital, 182; upon the sheriff questions, 183; on O'Connell, 183; concerning official appointments, 185; concerning Bishop Doyle's letter on taxation in Ireland, 186; on David Plunket's appointment to the office of Prothonotary, 187; private letter concerning disturbances in Munster, 187; reply to Spring Rice concerning Lords Justices, 188; letters to Lady Morgan concerning his wife's illness, 191; to Spring Rice on the Jury Bill, 193; despatches on education, etc., 193; answer to the Duke of Wellington's letter asking him to retain the office of Chief Secretary, 195; illness and death of his wife, 196; retains office, 196; capacity as minister, 197; popularity in Ireland, 197; letter to the Duke of Wellington concerning the Roman Catholic Association, 199; on the Eastern Question, 199; on the amendment of the Sub-letting Act, 201; on the Catholic Relief Bill, 202; retires from the Administration, 203; contributions to the *Literary Gazette*, 203; reflections on the first fifty years of his life, 204; succeeds his father as Viscount Melbourne, 207.
- Lambton, his protest against Canning's speech upon Parliamentary Reform in 1819, 94; his motion for Reform in 1821, 106.
- Lansdowne, letter to Lord Plunket, 105; answer to William Lamb's letter concerning the public works, etc., of Ireland, 160; to Spring Rice's letter on Government advertisements in Irish papers, 162; his intimation to Hart concerning O'Connell, 183; misunderstanding with Melbourne concerning the omission of the names of Mr. Bicheno and Sir Charles Grey in the Irish Poor Inquiry Commission, 299; on the dismissal of Melbourne and the ministry in 1834, 314; to the author on the personal antipathies prevailing at the formation of the Melbourne Government, 363; receives the Order of the Garter, 395; carries an address to the Crown with respect to the formation of railways in Ireland, 475.
- Lattimore, Charles Higby, moves a free trade resolution, 534; visit to Melbourne, 545; letter to Sir Robert Peel on the Corn Laws, 545.
- Liverpool, First Lord of the Treasury, 61; on the proceedings against the Queen, 94; introduces a bill of pains and penalties, declaring the marriage of Queen Caroline to be dissolved, 102; on the Alien Act, 119.
- London University, introduction of measure giving power to the same to grant degrees, 388; Lord Melbourne's views, 388.
- Longford, on the Suppression Bill, 208.
- Longley, Dr., his correspondence with Melbourne, 402; becomes Bishop of Ripon, 402; his correspondence with the Premier on the Church Rate Bill, 429.
- Lyndhurst, 193, 221; his speech in answer to Lord Brougham against the Reform Bill, 246; his proposals with regard to the Bill on the Creation of Peers, 260; is appointed Chancellor, 316; on municipal reform, 384; his speech on the Irish Municipal Bill, 405; against Melbourne, 411; reply thereto,

- 412; amendments on the Precedency Bill, 495; speech on the legislative failures of the Government, 505; Melbourne's reply thereto, 505; his embarrassment on resuming office, 525.
- Lytton, Bulwer, 111.
- Macaulay, Mr., his letter to Spring Rice in 1834, with respect to the Premiership, 295; prejudice against Brougham, 356; letter on peerage reform, 406; return from India, 456; refuses the post of Judge Advocate, 462; is elected for Edinburgh, speech at the election, 482; accepts the office of Secretary at War and a seat in the Cabinet, 490.
- Mackintosh, Sir J., his bills on capital punishment, 97; objects to the Alien Act, 119; on Plunket, 171; is appointed Judge Advocate, 221.
- Manners, Sutton, declines the Premiership in 1832, 262; is defeated as candidate for the Speakership, 346.
- Melbourne, Lady, her beauty, marriage, birth of eldest son, portraits of, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 10-13; gaieties of the time, 10; life at Melbourne House, 13; takes part in the Westminster election of 1784, 18; her friendship with Mrs. Damer, 21; aspirations regarding her younger son, 27; influence over Byron, 67; her death, 86.
- Melbourne (father of the subject of this Memoir), appointment in the Prince of Wales's household, 17; supports the Ministers throughout the American war, opposes Burke's Retrenchment Bill, is created a viscount, 64; devotes a portion of his park to form a racecourse, 28; attends the King of France into London, 71; is created a peer, 72; death, 203.
- Melbourne, William, Viscount (*subject of this Memoir*; see also Lamb, William), speech in answer to Longford on the Suppression Bill, 208; measures to quell the disturbances in Hampshire, 225; confidential circular to the Lords-Lieutenant of the counties, 225-6; letter to the Duke of Wellington on the disturbances in Hampshire, etc., 226; correspondence with the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle on the Sub-Letting Act, 233; opinion on the state of anarchy in Ireland, 235; on Stanley's Arms Bill, 239; speech on Reform in 1831, 240; on the Bristol and Birmingham riots, 248; on Irish Church Establishment, 252; opinion with respect to the creation of peers, 257; his opinion on the command of the army, 266; letter to Lansdowne upon the state of Ireland and foreign affairs, 266; colloquy with Haydon, 268; opinion of Stanley's speech on the Coercion Bill, 270; causes inquiry to be made into the condition of factories, 271; acquaintance with Mrs. Norton, 272; obtains an appointment for her husband in the Divisional Magistracy of London, 272; to Lansdowne with respect to the Tax meetings, 278; interviews with Mr. Revans, Poor Law Secretary, 279; duties in the House of Lords in 1834, 279; conversation with Mr. Disraeli, 276; anxiety concerning his son, 276; refuses Viceroyalty of Ireland, 278; his letter to Rice concerning the fining of Dundonald, 280; refusal to receive the deputation from the trades unions in 1834, 283; opinion concerning the new Poor Law, and the repeal of the Union in Ireland, 285; is offered the Premiership, 287; letter to the King, declining coalition, 288; to the Duke of Wellington on the same subject, 290; reply thereto, 291; to Lansdowne concerning Duncannon, 296; to the same with respect to the Irish Poor Inquiry Commission, 299; on O'Connell's agitation in 1834, 301; letter to Lansdowne concerning the bestowal of the Order of the Garter on the Duke of Grafton, 302; reflections during the fire at the Houses of Parliament

in 1834, 303; letter to Althorp on the death of his father, 307; interview with William IV., 307; conversation with the King concerning proposed Government appointments in 1834, 308; dismissal from office, 310; letter to Spencer, 312; to his colleagues, 316; letter to Lansdowne on Brougham's offer to Lyndhurst to become Chief Baron, 319; interviews with Haydon, 347; his characteristics, 348; moves an amendment to the address at the opening of Parliament in 1835, 349; reply of the Duke of Wellington thereto, 349; Brougham on the same, 399; becomes Premier again, 352; opinion of Lord Brougham, 356; remarks on O'Connell's letter on the Repeal of the Union, 365; second administration, 368-9; confidential letter with respect to Brougham's resolutions concerning primary education, 371; speech on the Irish Church, 372; conduct towards the King, 378; conversation with a friend on the effect on Dissenters of the Municipal Reform Bill, 387; supports Palmerston in offering an alliance with Austria and France against Russia, 384; carries the Bill for Municipal Reform, 386; letter to Lord John Russell on Brougham's Bill for Regulating Patents, 387; private circular with respect to the measure giving power to the London University to grant degrees, 388; letter to Spring Rice on the mission to France to negotiate terms of commercial intercourse, 388; requesting his return to town, 389; on the candidates for the office of Second Remembrancer, 389; letter to Lansdowne on the Irish Church Question, etc., 394; advising him to accept the Order of the Garter, 395; objection to the nomination of Bickersteth as Chancellor, 396; letter to Spring Rice concerning the candidates for the Chancellorship, 396; to Lansdowne on the same, 397; to Lansdowne con-

cerning the consideration of the royal speech, 400; to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the national prosperity, 400; his satisfaction at the opening of Parliament in 1836, 401; correspondence with Dr. Longley, 402; reasons for refusing to confer a bishopric on Dr. Arnold, 403; opinion of the appointment of Dr. Hampden to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, 403; letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the state of the circulating medium, 404; on the abuses of the Irish municipal corporations, 405; letters to the Hon. Mrs. Norton, advising a reconciliation with her husband, 408; Norton *v.* Melbourne, 409; reply to Lyndhurst's summing-up of the session, 412; refusal to resign, 415; his way with his colleagues, 416; letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the appointment of Mr. Shiel to the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland, 420; and of Sir Anthony Carlisle as Medical Examiner, 420; on the panic in the Money Market, 422; death of his son, 424; letter to Lansdowne on the creation of peers, etc., 425; on the Irish Church Establishment, 425; correspondence with Longley on the Church Rate Bill, 429; letter to Francis Baring on the state of the Money Market, 431; to Lansdowne on patronage, 432; letter on Church appointments, 433; on the Irish Corporation Bill, 433; visits to Holland House, 434; letters to Lansdowne during the last illness of the King, 435; on the accession of Queen Victoria, 437; on the appointments in the Queen's household, 438; containing an invitation to Windsor from the Queen, 440; undertakes the duties of Private Secretary to the Queen, 439; supports Palmerston in his resolution to send a force to Oporto, 441; letter on proposed reform of Crown estates in Lancashire and

Cornwall, 441 ; to Spring Rice on the state of the revenue, 442 ; his opinion on the Irish Relief Bill, 443 ; letter to Lansdowne on the offer of the Duke of Sussex to move the address in the Peers in 1837, 446 ; altercation with Brougham, 446 ; letters to the Duke of Wellington on the civil administration of the army, 447 ; correspondence with the same on the Commission for Inquiry into Army Promotion, 449-50 ; indifference to personal distinction from the Crown, 454 ; letter to Lansdowne with respect to creating peerages, 454 ; opinion on the Corn Laws, 455 ; letter to the Duke of Wellington on coast defences, 458 ; correspondence with the same respecting the Crown jewels, 459 ; letters to Spring Rice on Persian affairs, etc., 461 ; to Lansdowne, recommending an early meeting of the Cabinet, 463 ; opinion on the Afghan expedition, 464 ; letters to Lansdowne on the death of Lady J. Russell, 465 ; on Durham's intention to resign his post in Canada, 466 ; to Spring Rice, stating the day for the meeting of the Cabinet, 467 ; to Lansdowne on matters to be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet, 467 ; correspondence with the Duke of Wellington on the designs of Russia, 469 ; on marriage grants in connection with Douro's marriage to Lady Elizabeth Hay, 471 ; interview with Ebrington, respecting the appointment of the latter to the Vice-royalty of Ireland, 473 ; opinion on Sir Robert Peel's rejection of the project for the formation of railways in Ireland, 475 ; correspondence with Mr. Abercromby on his proposed retirement from the Speakership, 478 ; sends in his resignation after the passing of the Jamaica Bill, 480 ; resumes office, 481 ; speech on the occasion, 481 ; letter on postal reform, 485 ; to Lansdowne on the changes in

the Government offices, 488 ; his unbelief in the prognostics of politicians, 490 ; on the Queen's marriage, 491 ; letter to the Duke of Wellington on the Precedency Bill, reply thereto, 494 ; on Lord John Russell's bill respecting the printing and publishing privileges of the Houses of Parliament, 495 ; on the Irish Registration Bill, 498 ; on the Syrian Question, 499 ; his habit of thinking aloud, 501 ; speech on the Bill for the reform of the Court of Admiralty, 504 ; letter to King Leopold on the threatened war with France, 508 ; presents Mr. Owen at Court, 511 ; his speech on the same, 511 ; opinion on the Eastern Question, 515 ; speech on fixed duty on corn, 518 ; letter to Plunket respecting his retirement from the Chancellorship of Ireland, 520 ; receives the Queen and Prince Albert at Brocket, 522 ; resigns, 523 ; takes leave of the Queen, 524 ; receives an address from Derby, 525 ; his reply thereto, 525-6 ; his character and conduct during his administration, 527 ; closing years, 529 ; friendship of Lady Holland, 530 ; illness, 532 ; takes his place as leader of the Opposition in the session of 1843, 532 ; opinion respecting the claim of tenant-right, 535 ; conversation with Mr. Lattimore, 535 ; visits the Queen at Windsor, 536 ; failing powers, 537 ; sense of neglect, 537 ; letter to Sir John Easthope on the conduct of the clergy, 541 ; speech on public affairs, at a county dinner, 542 ; conversation with Mr. Lattimore on the Bank Act, 546 ; death and burial, 549.

Millar, Professor, 25. [Lamb, 38.
Minto, letter on William and George Morgan, Lady, notes from diary of, 85 ; and Lady C. Lamb, 113.
Morpeth, Secretary for Ireland in 1835, 358 ; on Irish Church Establishment, 425 ; his Irish Tithe Bill, 451 ; on the formation of railways in Ireland, 474.

Mulgrave, Viceroy of Ireland in 1835, 361 ; letter to Sir Michael O'Loughlen, offering him the office of Chief Baron, 452 ; reply, 453.

Municipal Reform Bill, in 1835, 384-5.

Newport, Sir J., 228 ; Comptroller of the Exchequer in 1834, 302.

Newspapers, reduced stamp on, 404.

Nicholas, the Emperor ; his feelings concerning the change of the Ministry in 1834, 319.

Nicholls, Mr., his report to the Poor Law Commission on Irish polity, 444.

Norfolk, Duke of, receives the Order of the Garter, 302.

Normanby, appointed Colonial Secretary, 472 ; Home Secretary, 488.

Northumberland, Duke of, appointed Viceroy of Ireland, 207.

Norton, George, 271 ; appointment in the divisional magistracy of London, 273.

Norton v. Melbourne, 408.

Norton, Hon. Mrs., her acquaintance with Melbourne, 271, 408-9.

O'Connell, his letter to J. D. Mullen on the Catholic Question, 128 ; and the agitation in Ireland in 1825, 133 ; letter to Plunket on Ribbonism in Ireland, 169 ; position in 1827, 183 ; election for Clare, 205 ; on the Suppression Bill, 207 ; speech on Catholic Emancipation, 214 ; expostulates with Anglesey on his intention to retain the law officers of the old Government, 229 ; criminal prosecution of, 230 ; patent of precedence, 253 ; agitates for the repeal of the Union in Ireland, 269 ; denunciations of the Coercion Bill, 269 ; Lord Wellesley's opinion of, 276 ; brings forward a motion, in 1834, for a committee to inquire into the means by which the Union had been carried, 285 ; its result, 285 ; letters in 1834, renewing agitation, 301 ; conduct on the dismissal of the Melbourne Cabinet,

320 ; omission from the Melbourne Ministry of 1835, 361 ; interview with Mr. Ellice, 364 ; addresses in the northern counties of Scotland on political topics of the day, 386 ; quarrel with Sir Francis Burdett, 386 ; letter to the people of Ireland on the accession of Queen Victoria, 442 ; refuses the office of Master of the Rolls, 452.

O'Loughlen, Mr. (Sir Colman), Irish Solicitor-General in 1834, 302 ; Attorney-General, 365 ; created Master of the Rolls, 417 ; correspondence with the Earl of Mulgrave respecting the office of Master of the Rolls, 452.

Owen, Robert, 509 ; presented at Court, 510 ; theories concerning national trades' unions, 510 ; writes to Melbourne, enclosing the petition of the deputation from the trades' unions, 512 ; reply thereto, 513.

Palmerston, is returned for Newport in 1790, 23 ; letter to Malmesbury on the elevation of Lord H. Petty to the Upper House, 52 ; on the Army Estimates, 76 ; dislike of the King, 145 ; opinion of Fitzgerald, 212 ; interview with Charles Greville with respect to the creation of peers, 257 ; draws up a minute of the Cabinet recommending an immediate creation of peers, 262 ; sides with Melbourne with respect to the removal of Hill from the command of the army, 267 ; wishes to be replaced in the Foreign Office, 359 ; letter to Melbourne on the designs of Afghanistan, 464 ; proposal that the French and English squadrons should sail to the Syrian coast to stay hostilities between the Pasha of Egypt and the Porte, 487 ; further proposals on the same subject, 487 ; the Syrian Question, 499 ; the Ashburton Treaty, 533 ; attends Melbourne's funeral, 549.

Parliament, measure for reform in, 92 ; dissolution of, in 1831, 238 ; fire at Houses of, 303.

- Parliamentary Reform, speeches on, in 1819, 94 ; bill for, 202.
- Parnell, Sir Henry, his motion to reduce the Civil List, 220 ; requests some preferment for Dr. Longley, 402.
- Peel, Sir Robert, on the Criminal Code, 113 ; on Plunket's speech for Catholic Emancipation, 171 ; declines the Premiership in 1832, 262 ; superiority in debate, 320 ; resigns office, 351 ; Municipal Reform, 385 ; denounces the project for the formation of railways in Ireland, 475 ; his proposal as Premier, on the resignation of Melbourne, 481 ; misunderstanding with the Queen, 481 ; speech on Melbourne resuming Premiership, 484 ; moves for the reduction of the duty on East India sugar, 542 ; reply to Mr. Lattimore's letter on the Corn Laws, 546.
- Peypys, Charles Christopher, 32 ; Chancellor, 397.
- Pereval, Mr., Cabinet of, in 1807, 47 ; resolution concerning the Duke of York, 52.
- Pereval, Spencer, 145 ; returned for Newport in 1827 ; his belief in the revelation of the unknown tongues, 399.
- Perrin, Mr., 232.
- Petty, Lord Henry, 25, 40 ; called to the Upper House, 52 ; letter from Palmerston to Malmesbury on his elevation to the Peers, 53.
- Phillips, Mr., Under-Secretary to Melbourne in 1834, 283.
- Place, Francis, political narratives by, 218 ; conversation with George Lamb concerning popular opinion, 227 ; on Lord John Russell's Reform Bill, 236 ; quotation from his diary regarding the meeting of the working classes on the second rejection of the Reform Bill in 1831, 247-8.
- Plunket, law officer of the Crown in 1806, 39 ; returned for Midhurst in 1807, 44 ; William Lamb's opinion of, 44 ; retires from office, 49 ; Attorney-General of Ireland, 105 ; his speech on the Relief Bill, 106 ; plea for religious liberty, 106 ; on the Catholic Association, 129 ; Letter to Lord Wellesley on the Suppression Bill, 131 ; on the Catholic Relief Bill, 141 ; Chief Justice of Common Pleas, 143 ; enters upon his judicial duties, 149 ; letter to Mr. Canning concerning the Catholic Association, 170 ; pre-eminence as an orator, 171 ; Peel's estimate of his speech for Catholic Emancipation, 171 ; Mackintosh's opinion on, 171 ; Fortescue on, 171 ; Russell on, 171 ; Holland's letter to him on the appointment of Alexander to the Chancellorship of Ireland, 172 ; letter to Spring Rice on the same subject, 173 ; appointed Chancellor, 235.
- Ponsonby, Lady Caroline, 33 ; her childhood, 33 ; letter to Lady Morgan, 34 ; her disposition, talents, etc., 34.
- Ponsonby, Mr. G., leader of the Opposition in 1808 ; retires from Peterborough, 77 ; is returned for Wicklow, 77 ; on retrenchment of civil expenditure, 79 ; member of the Secret Committee, 82 ; death, 84.
- Ponsonby, Dr., 182 ; advanced to the see of Derry, 264.
- Reform Bills, 235, 239, 247, 255.
- Regency, resolutions respecting the, in 1808, 54, 57.
- Regency Bill, disputes concerning the, in 1840, 102.
- Regent, Prince, his conduct, 57 ; accompanies the King of France into London, 71 ; severe illness, 93.
- Roman Catholic Emancipation, 208, 214.
- Roman Catholic magistrates, Lamb on, 176.
- Roman Catholic Officers Bill, 44.
- Roman Catholic Peers Bill, 107.
- Roman Catholic Relief Bill, 202.
- Roman Catholics, admission of, to elective franchise, 41.
- Romilly, Sir Samuel, on criminal law reform, 53 ; returned for Westminster, 88 ; death, 88.

- Russell, Lord John, on Plunket, 171; on the Test Act, 200; introduces the first Reform Bill, 235; is invested with the leadership of the Liberal party in the Commons, Home Secretary, 354; views concerning the Irish Poor Bill, 443; letter to Spring Rice respecting the Speakership, 479; undertakes the post of Minister for Colonial Affairs, 489; his Bill respecting the privilege of either House of Parliament to print and publish matters of any kind at discretion, 496.
- Sadler, Mr., speech against the Relief Bill, 210.
- Sartorius, Captain, his petition for reinstatement to his rank, 419.
- Scarlett, Sir James, 100; Solicitor-General in 1827, 145.
- Sheridan, Thomas, 21; competes with Mr. Huskisson as member for Liskeard, 40; his death, 90; William Lamb's intimacy with him, 91.
- Shiel, R. L., 128; conversation with William Lamb on agrarianism, 162; originates fresh agitation in Ireland, 192; Municipal Question, 420-1; is offered the Commissionership of Greenwich Hospital, 448; his conversation with Melbourne on the assassination of Norbury, 471.
- Smith, Sydney, on the Catholic Question, 127; his remarks on Melbourne's manner of dealing with deputations, 278.
- Spencer (*see* Althorp), letter to Lord Holland on retiring from office in 1834, 318; to Joseph Hume on the same subject, 318; his dislike of office, 319; before the opening of Parliament in 1835, 349; on Brougham, 356; letters relating to the Civil List, 445; private letter on the death of Mr. Drummond, 497; moves an address on the Free Trade Budget, 522; receives an intimation from the Duke of Bedford to be in readiness to form a new administration, 540.
- Spring Rice, Under-Secretary for the Home Department in 1827, 145; his letter to William Lamb concerning the constabulary of Ireland, 160; concerning Government advertisements in Irish papers, 161; his letter on Sir E. Bellew, 177; correspondence concerning O'Connell, 183; letter to William Lamb on his mistaking a knight for a bishop, 185; refusal of Lord William Bentinck's proposal to accompany him to India, 197; on O'Connell's re-election, 210; letter to Abercromby on Fitzgerald, 212; to Lansdowne on the Coercion Bill, 290; statement to the Government on the dismissal of Melbourne from office in 1834, 305; letter to Lansdowne on Spencer's retirement in 1834, 315; opinion concerning the Irish Poor Bill, 443; and the Civil List, 445; his letter to Lansdowne respecting Durham's decision to resign his post in Canada, 461; on Durham's return from Canada, 467; to Melbourne, offering himself as a candidate for the Speakership, 477; reply thereto, 477; on postal reform, 484; created Montague and Comptroller of the Exchequer, 487; article in the *Edinburgh* on the Education Grant, 491.
- Stanley, Mr., speech on the Irish Church, 119; appointed Under-Secretary for the Colonies, 154; Chief Secretary in Ireland, 228; challenges O'Connell, 230; introduces the Arms Bill, 239; his courage and eloquence as Secretary of Ireland, 265; obtains a seat in the Cabinet, 269; admiration for Grey, 269; his speech on the Coercion Bill, 270.
- Stanley, Lord, resigns his seat in Cabinet, 286; letter to Spring Rice on his claims to the Speakership, 478; speech at the opening of Parliament in 1836, 400; his Registration Bill, 498.
- Sussex, Duke of, offers to move the address in the Peers in 1837, 446;

- on the question of precedence, 494 ;
and the Regency Bill, 503.
- Thirlwall, Rev. Connop, Bishop of
St. David's, 500 ; interview with
Lord Melbourne, 501.
- Tierney, Mr., 63 ; successor to George
Ponsonby as leader of the Whigs,
1817, 84 ; Master of the Mint in
1827, 142.
- Torrens, Colonel, 444.
- Victoria, Queen, her accession, 437 ;
her household, 437 ; services of
Melbourne as her private secretary,
439 ; her marriage, 491 ; her sym-
pathy in the national interests,
499 ; visits Lord and Lady Cowper
at Panshanger, and Melbourne at
Brocket, 522 ; her letter to King
Leopold on the resignation of Mel-
bourne, 524.
- Volunteer police, organisation of, in
1831, 250.
- Wellesley and Canning, 60 ; Viceroy
of Ireland, 105 ; on the Habeas
Corpus Act and Insurrection Bill,
107 ; on the Catholic Association,
129 ; his official jealousy, 168 ;
impatience to be relieved from
office ; correspondence with Lans-
downe on the subject, 188 ; his
retirement, 188 ; reappointment as
Viceroy of Ireland, 276 ; opinion
of O'Connell, 276 ; accepts the
office of Lord Chamberlain, 356 ;
resigns the same, 356.
- Wellington, Duke of, appointed
Premier in 1828, 193 ; memoran-
dum on military administration,
194 ; letter to the French Am-
bassador on the Eastern Question,
199 ; to Anglesey on his visit to
Cloncurry, 206 ; on the Relief
Bill, 209 ; denounces Reform, 219 ;
First Lord of the Treasury, 314 ;
opinion on the Afghan expedition,
465 ; views on military patronage,
468 ; correspondence with Mel-
bourne on the designs of Russia,
469 ; to Melbourne on his resuming
the office of Premier, 481 ; reply
thereto, 482 ; on the policy to be
pursued with France, 506 ; his
opinion on the Eastern Question,
515.
- Whately, Archbishop, 279.
- William IV., his popularity, 215 ;
directs that the Duke of Norfolk
should be named a Privy Coun-
cillor, 215 ; state of politics at the
commencement of reign of, 215 ;
resists a creation of peers, 263 ;
dismisses the ministry, 310 ; his
letter to Melbourne requesting him
to inform Grey of his wish to see
the Earl at the head of the Govern-
ment, 352 ; his excitability on
subjects connected with national
defence, 378 ; harangue on the
Militia Bill, 381 ; letter on the
aggressive designs of the Czar,
382 ; on the action brought by Mr.
Norton against Melbourne, 410 ;
his dinners and toasts, 419 ; illness
and death, 435-6.
- Woulffe, Mr., 417 ; Attorney-General
for Ireland, 428 ; created Chief
Baron in 1838, 452.
- Young, Mr. T., private secretary to
Melbourne, 237.



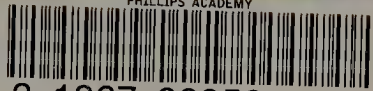
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